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OF ONTARIO



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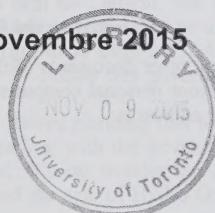
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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 2 November 2015

Lundi 2 novembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 novembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to welcome members from the Cement Association of Canada to our members' gallery. We are joined here today by Bruno Roux, president of Lafarge Canada; Marty Fallon, president of St. Marys Cement; and of course, Michael McSweeney, president of the Cement Association of Canada. I know that they're here today; I look forward to seeing them later this afternoon, and the other individuals who they brought with them. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce a friend from my riding of Essex, specifically Amherstburg. Carolyn Davies is here. She's a registered practical nurse, and also the spouse of my executive assistant, Merv Richards. So we'll welcome her here today.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm pleased to rise to welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park today. They're here for their lunch and TOGA party, and I invite all members to come down and get a poinsettia later on this afternoon. We have, in the members' gallery, George Gilvesy, from the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers; Ralph DeBoer, from Flowers Canada-Ontario; and Jan VanderHout, president of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce a number of guests over at the members' east gallery: from the Radiation Safety Institute of Canada, Steve Mahoney; from the Canadian Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists, Bob Wood; and from the Ontario Lung Association, John Chenery, Chris Yaccato, Andrea Stevens Lavigne and Connie Choy.

Also, this morning we were treated to Mike Holmes Jr. making an announcement about Radon Action Month in November, with his group, Amanda Heath and Mark Diplock. Thank you very much for joining us this morning.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Today in the House, a little bit later on, from 11 till 12, we will be having some international students here on behalf of the Lambton Kent District School Board. They will be visiting us from Taiwan, so welcome to them when they come.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think one of my friends may have introduced him; I'd like to introduce again Michael

McSweeney, not in his capacity with the Cement Association of Canada, but as a member of the working group on climate change, and just share with the House his extraordinary leadership and that of his industry. They have stepped forward as a leading industry on climate change, and we're very grateful for Michael's leadership.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to recognize Julia Empey, from my riding of Halton, who is page captain today. She has a lot of support here with her today: a group of family and friends in the members' gallery. Here with her are her dad, Brian Empey; mother, Catharine Murphy; brother Mark Empey; grandmother Agnes Murphy; uncle and aunt Tim and Michelle Croteau; cousins Michael and Declan Croteau; and family friend Anita Carbonelli. Thank you so much for coming in.

Please give them a warm welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last Thursday, the Financial Accountability Officer revealed what we've known all along: The sale of Hydro One was a bad deal for Ontario. Not only did he raise concerns about future revenue, but he also showed that this deal could bring in as little as \$1.4 billion for infrastructure, not the \$4 billion this government promised.

It's because of this flawed planning that we now have 185 municipalities pleading with the government to not proceed with this deal. It's no wonder the Minister of Energy himself opposed the sale of Hydro One when he was the mayor of Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy has said that the Auditor General didn't understand the electricity file. Does he now share the same opinion about the Financial Accountability Officer?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that our plan to broaden ownership of Hydro One is on track to realizing the \$5 billion to pay down debt and the \$4 billion towards our 10-year plan to invest \$130 billion in much-needed infrastructure. He did express concern about longer-term impacts, but he makes it very clear that he did not assess the economic benefits but just the company as it stands today.

His long-term concerns are more than mitigated by taking into account the extensive economic impacts of

110,000 new jobs per year from our infrastructure investments. The Conference Board of Canada says for every \$100 million invested in infrastructure, \$114 million is produced in real GDP.

We're proceeding, Mr. Speaker. This is good for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Energy: I just wish the Minister of Energy could listen to himself when he was the mayor of Ottawa.

It's not just that this sale may only bring in a fraction of what was promised, but the negative long-term consequences are going to last for Ontario.

The FAO revealed that the province will lose out on Hydro One's yearly revenue, as much as \$700 million a year. Frankly, that \$700 million is almost as much as you're cutting for doctors for patient care. That \$700 million won't go to paying down the debt in a province that has the largest debt in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister come clean and admit this deal is not in the best interests of the province of Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, across Canada, rural, suburban and urban municipalities face a \$120-billion deficit in infrastructure, and Ontario's 10-year, \$130-billion infrastructure plan addresses this for Ontarians.

Our \$4 billion of infrastructure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our \$4 billion of infrastructure funding from Hydro One will not come from new debt, tax revenue or service cuts. It is smart fiscal management.

The alternative, according to the Financial Accountability Officer, is to pay for new infrastructure with more borrowing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Energy: This government is mortgaging our future for a one-time gain.

The Auditor General has warned the Premier that this debt is already crowding out services Ontarians rely on. Our debt and deficit are out of control, and now, without the profits of Hydro One, the problem will only get worse. The debt is crowding out services like health care and education. No wonder you're doing the cuts right now to the doctors and patient care.

1040

Will the Minister of Energy tell us where the government plans to cut now to make up for this lost \$700 million—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

I will remind members that when I'm standing and when I sit down—thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I addressed that very question in answering the previous questions.

I'd also like to remind the leader that during the 2014 election, his party campaigned on a platform of "opening both Hydro One and OPG to investment," including the sale of shares—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: "That initial sale could later be followed by a public offering of shares to both institutional and retail investors." That's just what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

"Selling part of these two"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case the member from Dufferin-Caledon didn't hear me the first time—this is now the second time—would you please come to order?

Finish.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This is quoting them, Mr. Speaker: "Selling part of these two provincial assets will free up"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

The member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

The member from Nepean-Carleton knows better, and it's to stop.

Please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Quoting that party, Mr. Speaker: "Selling part of these two provincial assets will free up money to pay down debt" and customer "prices would continue to be regulated by the Ontario Energy Board."

This PC energy policy white paper is the latest and only policy on energy that party has released—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Just a reminder to all people: third person, to the Chair.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Minister of Energy: The minister is ignoring the facts. As CHCH's Randy Rath tweeted on Friday, "When overwhelming evidence proves your plan flawed, it is not weakness to change the plan it is leadership." We all agree Ontario needs better infrastructure, but the Hydro One fire sale isn't the way to go about it. Frankly, your 10-year plan on infrastructure doesn't change one cent pre- and post-sale.

Last week, the Financial Accountability Officer told us that this sale will have a negative impact on Ontario's finances.

It is time the minister showed the same leadership he showed when he was mayor of Ottawa. He stood up against the sale of Hydro One.

Will the minister stick to his principles, stand up for the citizens of Ottawa, and go to your Premier and say this is a bad deal for Ontario and a bad deal for Ottawa?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I said in my previous questions, this is a good deal for Ontarians. It creates 110,000 jobs per year for 10 years and meets the infrastructure deficit that we have.

He wants to talk about fiscal responsibility. First of all, the third party wants to raise taxes to pay for infrastructure. The PC Party wanted to fire 100,000 people to pay for infrastructure.

We have a responsible path forward. The people of Ontario expect the government to manage the province's finances responsibly. The \$4 billion that we're going to receive from Hydro One is not coming from taxes. It's not coming from cutting services. It's not coming from new debt. It's strong financial fiscal management.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Minister of Energy: I'm shocked that the Minister of Energy refuses to show leadership in the face of insurmountable evidence that the selling of Hydro One is a bad deal for Ontario.

As the Star's Martin Regg Cohn asked on the weekend, "What about the obscene salaries planned for Hydro One's new executive suite?" He called the \$4-million package to the CEO "unconscionable." He notes the compensation is "several times more than his predecessor got, and at least double that of his counterpart at OPG."

While the Liberals hand out multi-million dollar pay cheques to Hydro One executives, the FAO projects the province would realize a permanent financial deterioration from this sale.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why the Liberal government is ignoring the Financial Accountability Officer's report while they're lining the pockets of Hydro One's new executives?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that our plan to broaden ownership of Hydro One is on track to realizing the \$5 billion to pay down debt and the \$4 billion toward our 10-year plan to invest in \$130 billion in much-needed infrastructure.

He expressed some concern about the out-years, concerning what might happen in the out-years. He does not and he did not and he admitted not taking into account the economic development, the jobs that will be realized, coming from these investments in infrastructure.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Hey, you're only speculating. That's speculation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke shouted across the floor that it's speculation. It's the Conference Board of Canada that says for every \$100 million invested in infrastructure, \$114 million is produced in real GDP. This is good for the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the minister: You may not want to listen to the 185 municipalities, you may not want to listen to the numerous MPPs and ministers in the Liberal government who are on the record against this, you may not want to listen to former Premier Dalton McGuinty who is against this, but maybe today you'll listen to the Toronto Star.

I have another quote from Thomas Walkom, who said in his column that the Premier's "absurd Hydro One sale fits into a pattern of dubious Liberal schemes ... ranging from the gas plant debacles to the Ornge air ambulance scandal."

He continued, "Once again the Liberals are deliberately creating a monster they" are "unable to control."

It fits right in line with what the FAO had to say last week. He said that the province's fiscal position will deteriorate and there will be a revenue shortfall.

This fire sale is a bad deal for Ontario. Can the Minister of Energy tell the House why he is going through with this despite the fact that every fact and all evidence say this is a bad deal for Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The strongest advocates for more infrastructure investment are the rural communities and we're delivering to that rural community. Ontario, as the largest single shareholder of Hydro One, will continue to be a major beneficiary of the company's performance. In addition, it now receives billions for new investment in infrastructure without increasing borrowing, raising taxes or cutting public services. A better-managed Hydro One will generate a host of benefits and allow the province's share to grow in value over time as the company grows.

As I said, \$110,000 per year from our infrastructure program is going to generate economic development, it's going to generate revenue and it's going to more than deal with the concerns of the report that just came out concerning the out-years. The only issue of concern about the out-years—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. When the Premier formed her privatization panel, she promised that its decisions would be independ-

ently verified. The Financial Accountability Officer finally provided Ontarians with the first independent analysis of the sell-off of Hydro One, and his report says that if the sale continues, our province will be in worse financial shape. The FAO says that the sell-off will increase Ontario's debt over the next decade.

Will the government do the responsible thing: Acknowledge the FAO's red flags, cut our losses and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question. I think it's important that every member of the Legislature takes the time to actually read the report from the FAO. It's an important piece and I'm afraid that some members of this Legislature are actually misrepresenting what in fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Withdraw—are not fully understanding or reflecting what the FAO report says.

Let me just read, on page 9:

"This report does not seek to:

“—assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One

“—forecast the impact of the partial sale of Hydro One on electricity rates in Ontario

“—assess the prospects for performance improvements at Hydro One that might result from the partial sale....”

So Speaker, I think we'd better stick to the facts. I think the people of this province deserve that we all stick to the facts.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, sky-high Liberal hydro rates are the number one challenge facing Ontario's business competitiveness. The FAO's report shows that Ontario businesses will continue to pay a surcharge on their bills to cover Liberal mismanagement of the hydro file—\$600 million a year via the debt retirement charge until at least 2018-19.

Will this government do the right thing: Cut our losses, stop the sell-off of Hydro One and address the sky-high hydro rates that Ontario's businesses are trying to deal with?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do acknowledge that hydro rates are an issue for business, and that's why we've taken certain steps to reduce the upward pressure on those hydro rates.

I want to remind the leader of the third party once again that the Financial Accountability Officer very, very clearly states that this report does not forecast the impact of the partial sale of Hydro One on electricity rates in Ontario. I understand there is speculation on their part, Speaker, but they cannot rely on the FAO's report to make those assertions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer says that this is a bad deal and that it will cost the people of Ontario for a long time.

The FAO was clear that the economic benefit of infrastructure investments occurs regardless of how they're financed. I think the Minister of Energy should listen up to that fact. He was also clear that the province will be losing nearly half a billion dollars a year in net revenue. That is money that could be going towards infrastructure, for example. Instead, the government will now need to find that money elsewhere.

The FAO discredited all of the Premier's claims regarding this sell-off. Will the government do the responsible thing: Acknowledge the FAO's red flags, and put a stop to any further sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the Financial Accountability Officer did—and he did a very fine job and we thank him for the report—is to quantify the fiscal impact for one part of this deal. What he did not look at, and what he very clearly states he did not look at, is the other side, which is the benefit that we will all receive from making those investments.

It's about increasing productivity in this province. It's about getting people home from work more quickly. It's about making those critical infrastructure investments and putting people to work. We are moving forward because we believe that we need to double down on infrastructure spending: \$130 billion over the next 10 years. That money has to come from somewhere, and broadening the ownership of Hydro One is one way we'll get the revenue to do that.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier: The FAO said that selling off Hydro One is the worst way to fund infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

The sell-off of Hydro One has only ever represented, however, a tiny fraction of funds that this government claims to need for infrastructure. The government has lots of options to fund those projects. The FAO suggested that they could simply borrow the money and the province would, in fact, be better off in the long run. New Democrats have suggested the government could raise corporate taxes one percentage point, and they would raise even more money than they needed for infrastructure.

Why is this Liberal government choosing to sell off Hydro One when it is the only option that's guaranteed to lose Ontario money?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: People who watch what happens in this chamber will know that no matter what the problem, the solution from the third party is to raise corporate income taxes. We have heard that money being spent for many, many, many different initiatives, and now today we're hearing about doing that for infrastructure. It's unfortunate that they've run out of ideas when it comes to making investments. Their only idea is to raise corporate income taxes; that's the solution to everything.

We actually on this side of the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The engagement of the government side with the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek is not helpful.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are absolutely committed to investing in infrastructure. That does cost money. We're looking at a range of ways to pay for it, one of which is broadening the ownership of Hydro One. It's creating jobs and building important infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All Ontarians support building and renewing our infrastructure; that's not up for debate whatsoever. But the sell-off of Hydro One isn't about funding infrastructure. It never has been. The sell-off could net just 1% of the Liberals' infrastructure promises in new cash. By plowing ahead, the Liberals are waving goodbye to nearly half a billion dollars each and every year in lost revenues. These are revenues that could actually be used to invest in infrastructure, Speaker.

My question is simple: If this deal isn't about infrastructure, then exactly what is it really about?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's absolutely about infrastructure. I think it's maybe an important thing to actually walk through some of the numbers that we're talking about here. We remain on track, and the Financial Accountability Officer actually confirms that we are on track to realize our estimate of generating about \$9 billion through this IPO, Speaker. We've already received into the Trillium Trust a special dividend of \$1 billion, and we will also benefit from \$2.2 billion in deferred taxes. The final share price of \$20.50 is at the high end of the initial share price range of \$19 to \$21. We are on track to proceed in a careful, staged manner to maximize the value for Ontarians and to be able to make the investment in infrastructure that the leader of the third party says she wants but doesn't have a plan to pay for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals are trying to put some quick cash on a balance sheet to try to hide 12 years of scandal and waste. The FAO has clearly laid out that Ontarians will not benefit from the sell-off of Hydro One, but it looks like some well-connected Liberal friends and insiders surely will, Speaker.

The people of Ontario deserve to hear it from their government directly: If, as the FAO says, the people of Ontario aren't benefiting from this deal, just exactly who is benefiting?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I smell a conspiracy theory. I'm not quite sure where she's going with that, but I tell you that the people who will benefit from this are the people of this province, the people right across this province who are demanding of their governments—provincial, federal and municipal—to make the necessary investments in infrastructure. If the leader of the third party thinks that we are doing just fine when it comes to our infrastructure, well, I disagree, and the people of this province disagree.

We've been thoughtful about this, Speaker. We have looked at this very, very carefully, and the result is that

we'll be able to accelerate investments in infrastructure, and that's what the people of this province elected us to do.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question today is for the Acting Premier. The Financial Accountability Officer raised six key questions in his report last week that he couldn't answer because the government deemed the information to be a cabinet document. That means code for, "We've got something here that we don't want the public to know about." In spite of the documents that the ministry withheld, the financial watchdog was still able to prove that this isn't just a bad deal; this is a terrible deal for the people of Ontario.

When your finance minister was asked if he would provide the documents, he was quick to say that the Financial Accountability Officer Act doesn't let him do that. The FAO told us, though, that there were ways that the ministry could have gotten him the information without jeopardizing anything. So, Speaker, why is it acceptable to the Acting Premier that ministers of the crown only act in a transparent manner when they find it convenient to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think the Financial Accountability Officer might have some thoughts on how his report is being described in this Legislature. What he did do is, he looked very carefully at the numbers, and he did determine that, when he looked at one part of this—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order—second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —that there would be an ongoing revenue loss. That was not news to government, Speaker, and it should not be news to anyone here. We always knew that of course when we sold a portion of Hydro One there would be less revenue, but the benefits outweigh the loss in revenues. That's what this is all about. It's why we are doing this. In the end, people will have a different kind of asset but we'll retain the control of Hydro One. We'll be able to have that public interest at heart, plus we will have the infrastructure that we need.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Clearly, the Acting Premier needs to hire a new translator because that's not what the FAO said at all. The FAO said that this was going to worsen the government's fiscal position long-term. It's good to know, though, that after 12 years, this government can still play that old shell game. They'll move things around, but they're not getting the money that they say they're going to get—not new money—from this sale.

When the Financial Accountability Officer needs records from the government to do his job, they say it's the act that holds them back. When they want to try and

spike a critical report in the press before it can overshadow the beginning of the Hydro One fire sale IPO announcement on Thursday afternoon, they forget that the act is even there and, suddenly, documents are appearing to their friends in the media.

Acting Premier, since your ministries have already violated the act, will you get them to do the right thing and release the cabinet documents that the Financial Accountability Officer needs to do his job properly?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the member opposite would actually like to hear directly from the Financial Accountability Officer that he was, in fact, happy with the level of co-operation from our government. Here's a quote from July 19: "I've been happy with the ongoing willingness of finance and energy to work with us on this file."

Let's not forget what this is all about. It's about investing in infrastructure—\$130 billion. That's 110,000 jobs. It is rebuilding the infrastructure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Highways, schools, hospitals and transit will be able to do that now, not 10 or 20 years from now.

Experts have said we are not spending enough: 5% of our GDP should be spent on infrastructure. We have to remember that not making investments has a cost, too. We've looked at the whole picture.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week's FAO report showed that once this government sells off 60% of Hydro One, Ontarians will lose up to \$500 million a year every year in the long run. This is money that could have been spent on education, on health care, on poverty reduction.

Unfortunately, for Ontarians, that money is as good as gone, while a number of the Premier's friends and Liberal insiders stand to line their pockets.

Will the Acting Premier finally concede that the sell-off of Hydro One is a bad decision for Ontario's families and businesses?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think the member opposite acknowledges that we do need to invest in infrastructure. I'm going to assume that you do believe that she does believe we need to spend on infrastructure. The question that remains is: How quickly can we do it and how are we going to pay for it?

We are looking at our assets. The people of Ontario own a number of assets. We have to make sure we're getting the best value for those assets. One of those assets is Hydro One. We very carefully looked at how we could make sure that the public interest is protected and, at the

same time, unlock some of the cash available in Hydro One so we can add other assets to our portfolio. We need other assets now; we're going to invest in those assets and we're going to do that, in part, by broadening the ownership of Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Financial Accountability Officer did some economic modelling that this government has a responsibility to listen to. What we are hearing today is that you do not trust the FAO and that you're not listening to him, and he mentioned that in his press conference.

The FAO's report also showed that privatizing Hydro One will cause Ontario's net debt to rise. Under this Premier's leadership, Ontario now has the most debt of any subnational government in the world. More debt means less money invested in the priorities of Ontarians, and now the FAO has confirmed that the province's net debt will be even higher, leaving a significant burden on future generations and less money for health care, education and, yes, even infrastructure.

It is always Ontario's families that end up paying the price for this government's short-sighted and reckless actions. Will the Acting Premier make the responsible decision and stop the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are proceeding because we need that infrastructure and we need it now. When we did embark on this, we did look very, very closely at it. We did acknowledge that there would be revenue from Hydro One that we would not be receiving in the future. We've gone into this with open eyes. We are getting the ability to build badly needed infrastructure. That's what this is all about, and we will continue with that work.

TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is to the Minister of Transportation, who I had the great pleasure of hosting this past summer in my riding of Davenport for a transit town hall. One of the issues raised was traffic gridlock.

Today, Canada's Ecofiscal Commission is issuing its report and recommendations on how to address traffic gridlock. The report, titled, *We Can't Get There from Here: Why Pricing Traffic Congestion is Critical to Beating It*, outlines four key recommendations for governments of all levels.

One of the specific suggestions in the report is that our government should build new, high-occupancy toll-lane capacity on provincially owned 400-series highways. The Ecofiscal Commission believes that this could be a practical approach for reducing congestion in and around the GTHA.

I know that previous budgets have mentioned the possibility of implementing HOT lanes. Can the minister please provide members of this House with an update on what our government is doing to move forward on this file?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member for Davenport not only for the question today but for the wonderful job that she does representing her community.

Our government knows how important it is to manage congestion, connect people to jobs and build communities. Our government continues to make record investments in transit and transportation infrastructure.

While investing in transit is an important part of our plan, we're also studying what other tools we can use to help alleviate congestion. That's why we are bringing forward a strategy to developing high-occupancy toll lanes in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Both in the 2014 and 2015 Ontario budgets, we included the commitment to dedicate net revenue gains from high-occupancy toll lanes when they become available. We have looked at other jurisdictions and observed their success when using HOT lanes to reduce daily commute times and the environmental impacts of car emissions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his response.

I know that to my constituents in Davenport, traffic, transportation and commuting are all very important. I know that many living in my riding of Davenport are very interested as well to know more about what our government is doing to implement HOT lanes on provincial highways.

In fact, over the summer I heard from many in my community about the success of the HOV lanes we established for the Pan and Parapan American Games. While many were skeptical about the use of these HOV lanes, they proved very successful for those travelling through the GTHA during one of the busiest summers we've seen on Ontario's road network.

Can the minister please tell members of this House more about when we can expect to see HOT lanes rolling out on Ontario's highways?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank that member for her question. This past summer, we saw 235 kilometres of temporary HOV lanes established on GTHA roadways for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games as part of our games route network. Of course, the Pan and Parapan Am Games were extremely successful, and we're proud that our transportation plan made sure that all athletes got to their competitions on time and kept the region moving.

Now we're taking the information that we received to inform future transit and transportation planning, including how to implement HOT lanes. We know that there is a lot of public interest in how HOT lanes could be implemented on Ontario's highways, and we want to make sure that we get it right. This is why we will carefully consider location as well as how HOT lanes will help manage traffic congestion.

While the exact locations of future HOT lanes are still under study, we do hope to be able to provide an update on our implementation plan by the end of the year.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Families all across Ontario will face impossible choices this winter due to the government's irresponsible hydro policies. Ratepayers are choosing between paying their hydro bills or lining up at the local food bank.

This is because as of yesterday, they are paying 17.5 cents a kilowatt hour for on-peak electricity. That's over four times more than it was when this government came to power. The primary reason for these devastating increases is the exorbitant contracts they have signed under their failed Green Energy Act. If the government continues to sign these contracts, they are going to increase hydro poverty even more.

Will the minister finally address the reality of skyrocketing hydro rates and stop signing these unaffordable contracts?

1110

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that our 2013 long-term energy plan projected rate increases over a 20-year period, and that the increases announced several weeks ago are below those projections.

In addition, the member knows we are continuing to mitigate rates through a new Ontario Electricity Support Program that will reduce rates for modest-income families by \$360 per year. In addition, the debt retirement charge imposed by the Conservatives is being removed from bills starting in nine weeks, saving homeowners \$70 per year. These are in addition to existing programs—the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which will give seniors up to \$1,131 per year, if they qualify. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program continues, in addition to the new OESP. We're taking significant steps to mitigate rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Again to the minister: The minister knows that this shell game of programs is just a drop in the bucket compared to the problems the Liberals created for energy ratepayers all across the province. The increases that came into effect yesterday mean that the average ratepayer will pay over \$120 more per year, with more of that still coming down the pipe over the next half-decade. These increases are going to hurt rural and suburban Ontarians even more because those ratepayers are more likely to live in a detached dwelling.

The minister knows that energy poverty is deepening in this province because of his policies. How can the minister justify continuing to go down such a dangerous path when he knows of the misery it will create? Or does he simply not care about the people of Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We continue to create programs to mitigate rate increases. We continue to communicate that to the public so that they can get some relief from electricity prices.

But I wonder how many times the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has actually put in his householder that there is a credit of up to \$1,131 for

seniors, that we have an OESP which will take \$360 per year off modest-income families. I'd like to know why he doesn't sell programs that make sense for consumers in this province instead of standing up here, grandstanding and exaggerating the increase by 2.5 times what it actually is.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Acting Premier. This week, education workers, students and Ontario families are once again facing growing uncertainty. Over the summer, the Minister of Education assured parents that their kids would return to a routine fall semester. The education minister failed to get the job done.

In September, education workers withdrew select services, and in October, extracurricular activities were put on hold. The education minister failed to get the job done.

After months of botched attempts to reach a negotiated settlement, will the Acting Premier finally assure families that schools will return to normal in November?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite, and all Ontarians, that our top priority has always been to protect the gains we have made in one of the world's finest education systems. We very much want to ensure that students and teachers have a great year, a school year with full programming available. We want students in their classrooms and teachers in the classrooms right across the province.

We have been engaged in discussions with ETFO, with CUPE, with OSSTF education support workers. The minister is not here today because she's engaged in that bargaining, which has been very, very intense over the last several days. At this time, bargaining is continuing. We do look forward to providing an update later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Back to the Acting Premier: The reality is that under the leadership of the Minister of Education, Ontario has undergone labour unrest not experienced since the Harris era.

Let's be clear: Teachers want to teach, education workers want to do their jobs effectively, and they all deserve to be respected while doing so. Students want to learn. Parents want quality education for their children.

The failings of this Minister of Education are impacting an entire generation of students. Our kids are paying the price for the minister's failure. Will the Acting Premier show her government is ready to end the chaos in our schools by firing the Minister of Education?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think credit where credit is due: I'm sure the member opposite would acknowledge that these have been very difficult negotiations, because we are in a very difficult fiscal situation, but nonetheless, this Minister of Education has led successful negotiations and has achieved contracts with OECTA, Ontario English Catholic teachers; with Ontario's Secondary School Teachers' Federation; and with AEFO, the francophone schools. We have had significant

success and I think the member opposite should congratulate this Minister of Education for doing a very, very fine job indeed.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know this government has worked tirelessly to achieve the goal of making Ontario smoke-free, and I know first-hand that we have come a long way towards making that goal a reality. Smoking prevalence has decreased from 24.5% in 2000 to 17.4% in 2014, representing 408,257 fewer smokers. However, the use of tobacco products remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. More than two million Ontarians still smoke, and thousands of youths still take up smoking every year.

While we have made great strides in reducing the number of Ontarians who take up smoking, Mr. Speaker, through you, I'm very interested in finding out how we are going to reduce the prevalence of smoking among Ontarians.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I would like to begin by thanking the member from Kingston and the Islands for the question. She is absolutely right: We need to continue to drive down smoking rates in Ontario, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to some of our initiatives.

To accomplish the goal of reducing smoking in Ontario, my ministry has invested over \$340 million since 2007-08 for tobacco prevention, protection and cessation. We have listed smoking cessation drugs on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary and expanded access to nicotine replacement therapies for those undergoing addictions treatment.

While it is true that we have the second-lowest smoking rate in Canada, as I said earlier, there is still more work to be done. That is why effective this January, our government bans tobacco sales on university and college campuses and prohibits smoking on playgrounds, sport fields and restaurant bars, and we are moving to prohibit the sale of all flavoured—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I commend the minister for all her hard work and dedication to this issue and for sharing this great news, but I do wish to touch upon the last point that the minister made about kids taking up smoking or other bad habits. Research shows that the younger a person who starts smoking, the more difficult it will be to quit later in life, and many start to smoke in their teenage years. In 2011, smokers continue to report that on average they smoked their first whole cigarette at the age of 16 and started smoking regularly at 18 years of age.

Electronic cigarettes, or vaping, have been identified as emerging trends in Ontario. As a mother, I was concerned to see very young teenagers using these products, and I wonder if e-cigarettes are dangerous for our children and youth. Can the minister fill us in on how the

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is addressing these concerns of parents?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to once again thank the member for her question, and to take this opportunity to thank her for all of her work on the e-cigarette file that she has done so far, especially in committee last year. Thank you.

Our government is taking a responsible and cautious approach to protecting Ontarians, especially our youth, from any potential harm by regulating the sale and use of e-cigarettes. Specifically, we propose to ban the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19 and to prohibit the use of e-cigarettes in certain places where the smoking of tobacco is prohibited. To be clear, our approach does not ban e-cigarettes or vaping, but what it does do is to regulate e-cigarettes and vaping.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Michael Harris: While the Premier and minister play hot potato—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who to, please?

Mr. Michael Harris: To the Acting Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: While the Premier and the minister play hot potato on the need for receipts for their "you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back" payout to teachers' unions, people of Ontario see their game for the distraction it is. If they wanted receipts, they would have written it into the agreement right where the government commits to the payout, but it's not there.

Will the Acting Premier tell us where in the memorandum of settlement is the direction for the union to show receipts?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's just understand that the member opposite is talking about a process that is successful, that has been successful. Students have remained in the classroom.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Members opposite might not think that's an accomplishment, but having students in the classroom is successful, and it is in line with the net-zero framework, which is very, very challenging indeed. We've been able to accomplish this without making cuts to the classroom.

We did provide support to both our education partners: teachers' unions and school boards. The funds do not come out of the classroom; they come out of other changes to the contract. The money has not flowed. Unions will be required to provide accounting to show costs were incurred, and we will make those details public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, don't forget the success to the Liberal Party.

Speaker, there is no requirement for receipts, and there never will be. The memorandum is clear: "The crown shall pay to the OSSTF ... \$1 million"—no receipts are ever mentioned.

The receipt ruse is a red herring taken straight from the Liberal scandal-distraction playbook.

Given that there are no required receipts, and given that the government handed over millions to teachers' unions just one year after those unions spent millions on election ads to prop up the Liberals, the people of Ontario are concerned over the potential misappropriation of taxpayers' money.

Will the Acting Premier direct her caucus to vote in support of our call to bring in the Provincial Auditor to get to the bottom of this mess? It's a simple question: Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite wants a simple answer; he's getting one. The answer is yes. We are supportive of having the Auditor General look at this.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Trans-Pacific Partnership will have a profound impact on Ontario families, businesses and industries. Unfortunately, those families, businesses and industries can't prepare for what that impact will be, because the details of the agreement are still under lock and key.

The Ontario Auto Mayors caucus, which includes Oshawa's Mayor John Henry, has called for the release of the TPP in its entirety, to "help determine the impact of the agreement."

Will the Premier stand with the Ontario Auto Mayors and Ontario's auto communities, and call for public disclosure of the TPP?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think we all acknowledge that Ontario's auto sector is absolutely key to our economic growth. It's kind of remarkable to think that it contributes \$16 billion to our economy. It supports over 100,000 direct jobs and hundreds of thousands of indirect jobs. These are very important jobs, a very important foundation to our economy.

Throughout the TPP negotiations, we called on the federal government to conduct open and transparent discussions. Recently we've learned that some sectors of the auto industry may benefit from the TPP, like Toyota and Honda, which are key assemblers in Ontario.

Yet while the proposed TPP promises new market opportunities for Ontario firms, we are concerned that new, weaker rules for vehicles and auto parts may negatively affect the industry's ability to attract and retain investments. We're also concerned about the proposed tariff reduction schedule, so we're looking forward to learning more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: To answer the comment made by the Acting Premier about their conversations with the federal government regarding open and transparent discussions: During the federal election, Justin Trudeau was offered a private briefing on the details of the TPP. Through a spokesperson, he declined this invi-

tation, because he wanted to “release the text of the agreement for Canadians to see.”

Canadians deserve to know what this secret deal will mean for them. They deserve to see the details. Will the Acting Premier call on Mr. Trudeau to stand by his promise and release the text of the TPP for Canadians to see?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know we all look forward to the swearing-in of the new government. That will be happening. I think we all are optimistic that we'll see a refreshing change in Ottawa, certainly in terms of the relationship with the provincial government.

The briefing that the leader of the Liberal Party did not take in was the same briefing that the leader of the NDP did not participate in.

I am very optimistic that there will be a refreshing change blowing across this country.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Attorney General.

Minister, governments at all levels need to, try to and want to consult widely and encourage public comment on legislation and other public issues. To assist people in organizations to bring their best ideas forward on an ongoing basis, this Legislature recently passed the Protection of Public Participation Act. Concerned people in organizations with valuable input to offer need to know that when they present their ideas in public participation settings, they can do so securely and without fear of harassment. The members of our province's legal community agree and have supported the bill.

Would the minister tell the House what type of difference the Protection of Public Participation Act will make to ensure equal access to justice in Ontario, especially for concerned people with strong feelings or good ideas on projects and proposals within Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for his very important question, a very important idea for all Ontarians in that proper access to justice needs to be maintained. By protecting citizens against strategic litigation, our government is standing up for the values that the people of Ontario cherish.

This law will allow courts to quickly identify and deal with strategic lawsuits, minimizing the emotional and financial strain on defendants, as well as the waste of court resources. By protecting citizens against strategic litigation, our government is protecting the right of Ontario residents to speak out on matters that are important to us.

I am very pleased to say that Bill 52 passed third reading, meaning that after royal assent, the people of Ontario will be protected against meritless strategic lawsuits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, we need a balance between the two poles of intervenors unjustly making false allegations against proponents and organizations aiming to do something, and of companies with deep pockets

using civil litigation to intimidate public participants and cause people with legitimate concerns or ideas to shun the public participation process. To be specific, residents of a community with concerns about a project or a proponent should not fear a process server ringing their doorbell at night to serve a statement of claim on a frivolous and vexatious lawsuit.

Intimidation by lawsuit is still all too common today. We heard from some of the blameless victims on the bill's committee hearings about the loss and the turmoil that such suits have caused in their lives.

Minister, please tell the House how the act rebalances the justice system and stops meritless lawsuits while allowing legitimate defamation, libel and slander actions to proceed.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The proposed legal test for identifying strategic lawsuits is carefully balanced to ensure that lawsuits about expression that seriously harms reputation, business or the personal interests of others can continue. This bill will not allow anyone a licence to slander. This bill will even the playing field but will not guarantee that expression will always win over reputation.

We have worked hard to develop a proposal that balances the interests of defendants and plaintiffs in defamation suits. The test for identifying strategic lawsuits is carefully balanced to ensure that lawsuits about communications that seriously harm the reputation, business or personal interests of others can continue.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Associate Minister of Finance. The Premier has said she would cancel the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan if the Liberals were elected. Well, they were.

For years, the Premier said her preference would be an enhancement of the Canada Pension Plan to help people with their retirement. She knows the new Prime Minister agrees with her but the Premier still refuses to put the ORPP on hold. Now the Premier has directed her government to issue a request for proposals tender call for the ORPP investment strategy when it won't be needed. The Premier is still spending taxpayer money on this pension plan.

Will the government stop this bait-and-switch melodrama, stop spending taxpayer money preparing the ORPP payroll—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Associate Minister of Finance?

1130

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for her question. This government ran on a plan to boost retirement security for the people of Ontario and that is what we intend to do. We know that two thirds of Ontario workers have no pension plan. In fact, when you look at younger workers, that drops to one in four young workers who have a pension plan.

Absolutely, we have a new government in Ottawa and that means we have a government that is willing to co-operate with Ontario on the priorities that we see are important for the people of Ontario. We know that Prime Minister Trudeau is not able to enhance CPP alone. He will need the co-operation of the provinces and the territories in order to do so.

We are absolutely willing to be part of that conversation, but in order to ensure that we have adequate security for the people of Ontario when they retire, we're moving—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Again to the associate minister: Ontarians want to know if the Premier wants both her new ORPP as well as a bigger CPP. Ontarians and their employers need to know how much more government is going to take from them by raising payroll taxes and reducing their take-home pay.

This is a frightening question. I don't know if I want to hear the answer. Can the associate minister tell us, is the Premier now thinking of keeping her job-killing ORPP payroll tax on top of an enhanced CPP?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Our Premier has been very, very clear that we are moving forward with the implementation of the ORPP. We know that Ontarians deserve a secure retirement future when they retire. We've communicated to business and advised them of the implementation schedule and the rollout schedule, which will happen gradually. In January 2017, we will enrol the largest corporations, moving to medium-sized and then finally, in 2019, to small businesses. We will phase in contribution rates gradually over time as well.

Two thirds of Ontario workers have no pension plan. We've committed in legislation to enrol these corporations in a phased-in, gradual way, also ensuring that it is done arm's length from government so that the members of the plan will benefit from the plan when we implement it.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. At last week's launch of the gender wage gap consultation, many of those in attendance raised concerns about the Liberal government's lack of enforcement of existing pay equity laws. In particular, the government has failed to live up to its own pay equity obligations for public sector workers in developmental services, in child care and in home care.

Given that pay equity is a critical component of closing the gender wage gap, how can Ontario employers be expected to take the wage gap seriously when the government is refusing to fund pay equity for some of the lowest-paid women workers in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member opposite for the question and for joining us at the very

important announcement last week about closing the wage gap in Ontario.

We know there's more to do. We know that Ontario's Pay Equity Act continues to be recognized in Canada and internationally as one of the most progressive pay equity standards in the world. It was the first province to recognize Equal Pay Day. We're committed to building on those milestones and to make progress for women in the workplace.

In my mandate letter, the Premier asked me to support the work of the Minister of Labour in developing a wage gap strategy that will ensure Ontario continues to close the gap. I think we heard some very good advice at the launch last week from people across the sector.

As the member opposite knows, the government has appointed a steering committee to lead the development of a wage gap strategy. Consultations are under way now, and a report will be forthcoming—draft reports this fall and a final report in the spring.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: There are several things the government can do now to narrow the gap without waiting for recommendations from the gender wage gap steering committee. One of these is to apply gender lens to budget decisions, to look at the impact of tax credits and other budget measures on women.

Will the Acting Premier commit to applying a gender lens to the 2016 budget, especially with regard to the budget impact on women who experience the widest wage gaps; that is, racialized women, indigenous women and women with disabilities?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, thanks to the member for the question.

The question of the gender lens came up at the session last week. If the member will recall, I spoke to that. That is also in my mandate letter to address. Our Women's Directorate works across government ministries to ensure that gender considerations are integrated in all aspects of policy-making. There's work in the OPS through the Diversity Office. They play a key role, and the new gender wage gap steering committee is consulting to understand better how the wage gap affects women in workplaces.

I do want to say that this government has taken a number of measures to address the wage gap, whether that's raising minimum wage, full-day kindergarten, supporting programs to help women in the trades and information technology. We have a micro-lending program for women who want to start businesses. And we're the only province in Canada to introduce comply-or-explain legislation for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron-Bruce, on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: According to the order paper, I submitted a question to the Minister of Health

and Long-Term Care, and it's overdue. I was just wondering when he could tell me when my answer or response should be expected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, that is a point of order. It is overdue, and I would ask the House leader if there is an answer pending.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, we will make sure that that answer gets in in time, forthwith.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, I would like to welcome the family of page Julia Cooper, from Whitby–Oshawa, here this morning. We have her mother, Tara Cooper; her father, Greg Cooper; her brother, Nigel Cooper; and her grandparents, Jane and Clifford Cooper and Linda and Robert Mitchell, all here to see page Julia this morning.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I know all members in this House will be excited to wish happy birthday to the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook. He doesn't look a day over 58.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't know about how correct a record of him that is, but still.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business such that Madame Gélinas assumes ballot item number 3 and Ms. Fife assumes ballot item number 20.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 14, 2015, Madame Meilleur moved second reading of Bill 85. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anderson, Granville	Gélinas, France	Meilleur, Madeleine
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Arnett, Ted	Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia
Balkissoon, Bas	Hatfield, Percy	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hillier, Randy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Barrett, Toby	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Nicholls, Rick
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Orazietti, David
Brown, Patrick	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Poits, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadir, Shafiq
Clark, Steve	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Martow, Gila	Vernile, Daine
Fedeli, Victor	Matthews, Deborah	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Forster, Cindy	McDonell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McGarry, Kathryn	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Eleanor	Yurek, Jeff
Gates, Wayne	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 93; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Attorney General?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: They may not have arrived yet, but I want to introduce Doug DeRabbie and Matt Hiraishi from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. I want to thank them for their work to promote the need for carbon monoxide detectors in all residences in the province of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the beginning of November. Not only did November 1 mark yet another increase in electricity costs introduced by this province's government that seems disconnected from individuals who are finding it tough—we had a hydro increase in May, and as of yesterday, the cost of electricity goes up again. Enough is enough.

But with that, I want to park it because the beginning of November also marks so many other important milestones.

Of course, the beginning of November marks the beginning of Lung Health Month. We all know that it's very important to take care of our lungs and support the people who advocate for proper procedures and access to drugs that make life a little easier for people who find it difficult to breathe.

Also, the beginning of November marks a very special event in Toronto. That's when the country comes to the city. I just want to remind everyone that the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair kicks off this Friday, November 6. It runs through to the 15th. It's an amazing venue where Ontario's best of the best is celebrated, from the cattle shows through the horse shows through the jams and jellies and square dancing. The list goes on and on. I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the excellent education centres that are happening there.

Go by the goat exhibit. You might see some Boer goats from Maple Crest. They're the best Boer goats ever.

LONDON COFFEE HOUSE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am always proud to stand in this House on behalf of my constituents of London—Fanshawe, but I'm even prouder today to stand and share the phenomenal work done at the London Coffee House, a program of the Canadian Mental Health Association funded through United Way in partnership with the Salvation Army.

I was very happy to have visited the London Coffee House on World Homeless Action Day and to have spent some time with participants. The program offers support for mental health, addictions health and housing stability in a safe and welcoming environment. It is open to anyone aged 16 and older for drop-in, socializing, connecting, information and referral, friendships and peer support.

I'd like to share a poem written by Bob, who often attends the London Coffee House and is a member of their baseball team, who explains how valuable this program is to him.

It's a simple thing
A bat, a ball, a glove.

It's a simple thing
To be with friends you love.
It's a simple thing
To be out there
On a sunny field
And great fresh air.
It's a simple thing
To be part of the team
Where hopes are built
And one can dream.
But the truth is
My friend, you see?
It's not a simple thing
For you, or me.
We have our demons and our ghosts.
We even have our darkest hosts.
The battles we fight day by day
Bring us to this simple thing
Just to forget if only for a little while.
That's why this program is so valuable!

That's why the program is so valuable to Bob and the other participants. Thank you for the time to share this statement today with the House, Speaker.

GLENMARRY-PRESCOTT-RUSSELL DAY JOURNÉE DE GLENMARRY-PRESCOTT-RUSSELL

Mr. Grant Crack: On October 7, I had the great pleasure of hosting the sixth edition of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell Day here at Queen's Park. First, though, I want to thank the staff of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell and of the township of North Glengarry for their hard work in organizing GPR Day, as this day allows our region to showcase local food products in front of the entire Legislative Assembly. Once again this year, more than 200 people took part in the event, including the Premier, who came by, and multiple members of cabinet and my colleagues.

This year's GPR Day included all nine regional mayors representing the UCPR and the township of North Glengarry, as well as many local members of council. Each municipality benefited from the opportunity to meet with several ministers and their staff in order to advance economic development projects in their region.

I would also like to thank the local producers who contributed to this great event, which showcased regional products including Fromagerie St-Albert, L'Original Packing, Skotidakis goat farm, Mariposa Farm, Cakes On St-Philippe, Prima Cossa, Vert Fourchette, La Binerie Plantagenet, Beau's All Natural Brewing, Cassel Brewery, Domaine Perrault winery, Muirs Bakery, The Pickle Patch, Maple Ridge Farms, The Quirky Carrot, Glengarry Fine Cheese, Boulangerie Lanthier Bakery, Honey from the Glen and Fauxmagerie Zengarry.

Merci à tous ceux qui ont contribué à faire de cet événement un grand succès. Nous avons démontré encore une fois que Glengarry–Prescott–Russell est reconnu comme un leader au sein de la province.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise in the House today in recognition of five outstanding constituents from my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: John Baker of Lion's Head, Islay Livingston of Dundalk, Iowna Turner of Flesherton, Myrtle Timmins of Durham and Kris Dawson of Hepworth.

Mr. Baker was recently presented a Paul Harris award, the highest award from the Rotary Club for a non-member. Mr. Baker has for years entertained the crowds with his music at the pancake breakfasts and other events organized by the Rotary Club of Northern Bruce Peninsula. He also plays regularly at the Golden Dawn and Gateway Haven seniors' homes in Wiarton.

Ms. Livingston was named volunteer of the year by Grey Gables in Markdale for her many volunteer years in the nail salon, as well as helping organize social events and community outings for senior residents there.

Ms. Turner was presented with a special certificate of appreciation from Grey Gables for her more than 16 years of work and volunteer service at the lodge.

Ms. Timmins was named a lifetime member by the Zion Friendship Group, formerly named the Zion Women's Institute, after having served there since 1942.

Ms. Dawson, who is the local Independent Epicure consultant, was recently recognized in the local media for her donations to the 16 Owen Sound families who lost their homes to fire. Ms. Dawson first reached out to her friends and family asking for donations of \$10, which she then used to purchase Epicure What's for Dinner? packs for the fire victims. After that, with the assistance of the Epicure home office, she was able to mobilize help to restart the kitchens of the 16 households, which allowed the victims to cook great meals in their transition homes. The deliveries are made by the Owen Sound Salvation Army food bank.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the House to join me in thanking my constituents for making a difference in their community and wishing them all the best in the future.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last week, I had the privilege to attend the climate workshop in London. The workshop was sponsored by the UN Environment Programme and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The workshop brought together parliamentarians from around the world.

I had a chance to speak to MPs who are dealing with the impact of climate change on a daily basis in their homelands. The member of Parliament from Samoa set out the impacts of three years of drought that withered crops, only to have three years of cyclones in a row that

devastated the crops that survived the drought. The MP from Bangladesh outlined the massive disruption that faces that nation as one third of the low-lying country starts to go under water over the next few decades and 60 million people are forced to relocate. As he said to me, there are no climate deniers in Bangladesh.

MP after MP—from Ghana, to the Seychelles to the Cook Islands—talked about the need to relocate people inland. It is clear that the disruption we have seen from people fleeing Syria will pale in comparison to the migration that will come from climate disruption in the future.

Many nations are facing today what we in Canada will face tomorrow from climate change: disruption and dropping standards of living. It is time for substantial and ongoing action to cut Ontario's greenhouse pollution.

PORtUGUESE CULTURAL EVENTS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to extend congratulations and best wishes to the Portuguese cultural organizations in my riding of Davenport that celebrated, and are celebrating, their cultural weeks.

In particular I would like to congratulate Casa das Beiras, which at the end of September organized a full week of activities to celebrate the regions of Beira Litoral, Beira Baixa and Beira Alta. A special thank you to the president, Bernardino Nascimento, and his board of volunteers for organizing such a fantastic week.

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Casa do Alentejo just wrapped up a full week of events highlighting the region of Alentejo. Thank you to president Carlos de Sousa, his board and volunteers for organizing such a great week.

Casa dos Açores just launched their cultural week activities yesterday to celebrate the nine islands that make up the Açores. Congratulations to president Suzanne Cunha, her board and volunteers for organizing what promises to be a fun-filled week of activities.

The regional cultural week celebrations organized by many of these cultural organizations have served to promote the richness of the history and traditions of the many regions of Portugal. They have served to educate the Portuguese Canadian youth on their origins, and they have served to educate other communities across Ontario about the Portuguese culture and, more importantly, about the many economic, political and social contributions that the Portuguese Canadian community has made and continues to make to our province.

As the MPP for Davenport and a proud member of the Portuguese community, I'm privileged to represent the great riding of Davenport, which has a number of very active and engaged Portuguese cultural groups.

I want to thank all these organizations for their commitments to preserving the Portuguese culture so that youth with Portuguese roots may understand and appreciate their heritage. Obrigado a todos.

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, which was created as part of my private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act.

As people seal up their homes for winter, we want to remind them to check their chimneys and vents and to make sure they have a working carbon monoxide detector that hasn't expired. Detectors that were manufactured before 2008 should now be replaced. Carbon monoxide has no taste, no smell and no colour, so having a working detector is not just the law; it's the only way to know when carbon monoxide is in your home and the only way to protect your family.

I want to commend John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada for their dedication to raising awareness of the need for detectors and their generous efforts to provide them through fire departments to people in need.

I also want to commend all of the fire departments across Ontario who are taking steps this week to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide, such as the volunteer department in Neebing that added a kickoff to Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week activity as part of their Halloween open house; the Cobourg Fire Department, who were in Home Hardware last weekend to answer questions on installing detectors; and the Woodstock fire department and Woodstock and Ingersoll real estate board, who are hosting an awareness event this weekend.

Together, all of these people and organizations are saving lives. We want to recognize them for the difference that they are making on behalf of the people of Ontario. Thank you very much.

SALON THEATRE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me great pleasure to convey to this chamber yet another example of Kingston's well-known excellence in the performing arts. I speak of a unique group of young actors known as the SALON Theatre, best known for their ever-changing, humorous, educational and interactive walking tour productions about our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.

I've watched a few SALON performances and I've been immensely impressed by their skill and enthusiasm in presenting our cultural heritage in creative and highly entertaining ways. In portraying Sir John A. and his contemporaries as flawed in some respects, they've engaged with students and adults in some compelling conversations; for example, on colonialism as experienced by indigenous peoples.

In September's walk, they featured a rousing speech by Louis Riel, en français et en chanson, from the gallows. So impassioned was the actor Anna Sudac's rendition of Riel and so moving was the troops' song

about the hanging that it was hard to not feel transported to Regina in 1885.

The SALON Theatre deserves praise and support for their intelligent and highly skilled approach to education, with their entertaining mix of original song, dance and drama. I invite you all to come to Kingston and the Islands to see it for yourself. Merci beaucoup. Meeg-wetch. Thank you.

MOVEMBER

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very honoured to rise today to talk about Movember. It's a global charity that is promoting men's health and of course is fighting men's diseases and cancers. I know, Mr. Speaker, I saw you rubbing the moustache right there. I think you sport a fine Movember there, sir.

I also want everyone to note that—don't be afraid—you'll see thousands of men, not only here in Ontario but across our great country and around the world, Mr. Speaker, that will be sporting the peach fuzz to start off, and then, as it grows, it will form into some fantastic moustaches to help raise money.

But let's look at the important things that Movember is doing. Last year, 21 countries—over 700 million participants—funded over 1,000 programs for research in prostate cancer, in testicular cancer, in poor mental health, in physical activity and in heart health, some of the things that Movember is doing. So while we may see some very poor taste in moustaches over the next little while, what we will see, though, is money being raised to support some great causes to really support men's health and fight the cancers that need to be fought and make sure that we advise all men to get checked, especially over 50, especially when it comes to prostate cancer.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX ABOLITION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 ABOLISSANT L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION DES SUCCESSIONS

Mr. Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to abolish the estate administration tax and provide for related matters / Projet de loi 136, Loi visant à abolir l'impôt sur l'administration des successions et traitant de questions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The bill abolishes the estate administration tax and caps the fee for filing an estate certificate with the court.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a pleasure to stand in the House today to welcome the Ontario Mining Association for their annual Meet the Miners Day, which is happening tomorrow here at Queen's Park. This is the 37th year that representatives from the mining industry and government will gather here to better understand and appreciate the vital role of mining in Ontario's history and in our economy.

I don't think there's any argument that Ontario is fortunate to have an abundance of natural resources, including rich mineral deposits. Our government certainly understands this, and we also understand the importance of the mining sector to the province's economy, that particularly being the case in northern Ontario.

We have worked very hard to ensure that our mining sector remains strong and able to handle the challenges of a highly competitive and very dynamic global market. Some important facts: Ontario remains a top-10 mineral investment jurisdiction in the world. We lead Canada in spending on mineral exploration and we remain a destination of choice for mineral developers. We have 43 mines currently operating in the province of Ontario. We are a leading jurisdiction for both exploration and the production of minerals in Canada, and, as I said earlier, we are a major player across the world.

In 2014, we saw our value of mineral production reach a record \$11 billion, securing Ontario as Canada's lead province in mining and production. May I say that, even in the very uncertain global economic times that our province faces—the European debt crisis, the downturn in China, and certainly I think we need to acknowledge the depressed commodity prices—Ontario continues to be one of the most attractive destinations for mineral exploration in North America. So, Speaker, we are very optimistic about the future of mining in Ontario, as I know all members of this House are.

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Today, there are approximately 200 companies undertaking more than 300 mineral exploration projects here in the province. Nearly three dozen of those are at the advanced stage of that process. New mine construction includes KGHM's Victoria mine in Sudbury, Goldcorp's Cochenour gold mine expansion in Red Lake, New Gold's very exciting gold mine in Rainy River, and Rubicon's Phoenix Gold Project as well. In addition, there are a number of other mine expansion projects, such as Goldcorp's Hoyle Pond winze project in Timmins, that are actually under way. And we are very confident that several new mining operations will come into production over the next number of years. May I say, I include Noront's Eagle's Nest nickel mine in the Ring of Fire in that category.

Important facts, again, Speaker, that I think people need to know: Ontario has about 25% of the mining

sector jobs in the country. In 2014, the total number of direct jobs in mineral production was 26,000 in the province of Ontario, and some 50,000 jobs in related manufacturing and processing industries. May I say, the mineral sector is also the largest private sector employer of aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Our ministry is continuing our work on developing export markets for the mining supply and services sector, which is a huge economic driver in the province of Ontario. Over the last year, our ministry has led trade missions to a number of strategic destinations, including Chile, Sweden, India, Australia and Mexico, all with positive results. Since 2009, trade missions led by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines have resulted in millions of dollars in sales of mining supply and services. Again, we are top of the grade in that regard.

We're also helping companies in northern Ontario's mining supply and services sector enter new markets and diversify their client base. They are learning and at the front end of advancing their innovative products and services across Canada and around the world. It's measures like these that promote long-term sustainability and global competitiveness in our province, and that, of course, is what is key to our success.

We also are doing very substantial work. Work is under way on the renewal of Ontario's Mineral Development Strategy—something we first brought out in 2006. We think a renewal, a revitalization, of that is absolutely crucial. Our new strategy, which is expected later this fall, will help our government ensure that Ontario remains a global leader in mining, so that our mineral sector continues to provide significant social and economic contributions for the people of Ontario.

We're also working very hard on modernizing the Mining Act to help Ontario remain at the forefront of mineral exploration and production. Our Mining Act modernization will encourage prospecting, staking and exploration, and the development of mineral resources in a way that affirms aboriginal and treaty rights, is respectful of private landowners and minimizes the impact on the environment. Our plan to modernize includes an online registration system for mining claims which will replace the current ground-staking process. An online claim registration system will make the staking of mining claims more efficient and significantly reduce the environmental impact of mineral exploration.

Our government also recognizes very well that the cost of electricity represents a significant challenge for mining operations. Large industrial users of electricity, including mining companies, certainly have become significantly more competitive with the support of the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, which everyone in this Legislature knows so well. That NIER program is helping the largest electricity consumers reduce their energy costs by up to 25%. That, of course, is helping them to create and sustain jobs and maintain long-term global competitiveness. Certainly, many people who will be here tomorrow for our Meet the

Miners Day will be happy to tell you how important that program has been to the success of their companies.

What we're very excited about—and I'm very proud of and certainly proud of our government—is that our government has made support of this program permanent, with funding averages of about \$120 million annually. That was a hugely well received announcement. Again, I'm grateful to the Premier and to the Minister of Finance for making that program permanent. Under that program, since 2010, we have distributed more than \$484 million in rebates to qualifying participants.

It's such a huge part of our economic structure, Mr. Speaker, that we remain committed to investing in mining research through organizations such as the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation, or CEMI. These investments very much drive innovation and help ensure that Ontario remains a global leader in the mines and minerals sector.

There is no question that mining enriches our lives, from the salt on your table to rare earth metals for cellphones. Not everyone realizes how each and every day they are touched by the mining sector itself. It's a pillar of our provincial economy and it certainly provides social and economic benefits for all Ontarians.

Our government remains very committed to supporting mineral development in the province so that we can ensure that we continue to be that world leader for both exploration and mining investment. This does mean promoting mineral production and development in Ontario in a balanced manner. I use that expression frequently, Mr. Speaker, and I have from the moment that we introduced the modernized Mining Act. We need to do it in a balanced manner which very much includes protecting—I see my colleague across the floor is agreeing with me on this, how important it is to bring it forward in a balanced manner—protecting public health and safety, and minimizing the impact on the environment.

Meet the Miners Day is a day that helps us all to reflect on the role of the mines and mineral sector in our lives. So on behalf of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the province of Ontario, I am really very pleased that we are going to be having this very special 37th annual Meet the Miners Day here at the Legislature. I do want to invite all of the members to a reception, which will be happening tomorrow evening, Tuesday evening, in rooms 228 and 230. It's always extremely well attended; it's a lively gathering. I know there will be opportunities throughout the day to meet with many of the industry leaders.

I think the key thing, Mr. Speaker, for all of us here at the Legislature, is that together we can recognize the valuable contributions of our friends, our colleagues and our neighbours in the mining sector. It's going to be a tremendous day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I am pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party caucus, our leader, Patrick Brown, and our mining

critic, Norm Miller, to recognize the tremendous work of the Ontario Mining Association and their annual Meet the Miners Day, which will be held here at Queen's Park tomorrow.

This will be the first Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park for our leader, Patrick Brown. I'm proud to say that after becoming PC leader on May 9 of this year, one of the first things he did was to tour the Ring of Fire. We in the PC caucus hope to make the Ring of Fire mining project a reality, with mines coming into production and creating jobs in Ontario's northwest. Patrick certainly sees the opportunity for Ontario and the importance of moving this generational project forward.

Tomorrow, representatives from mining companies all across Ontario will be here in Toronto to bring their unique perspective to legislators.

It is truly amazing how much mining has contributed to Ontario. It has provided thousands of jobs, contributed billions of dollars to our provincial economy, and provided the identities for some of our most recognizable cities and communities.

Today, mining is getting safer, cleaner and more effective. New technologies continue to make Canada a world leader in mining. Here in Ontario, many former mines have been revisited and redeveloped for another generation.

All told, it is estimated that mining contributes \$10 billion per year to the Ontario economy and employs over a quarter of a million Ontarians in what is referred to as Ontario's mining cluster. Mining is also the largest sector employer of aboriginal workers.

When I was Minister of Northern Development and Mines, almost a decade and a half ago, the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies ranked Ontario the number one mining jurisdiction in the world. I don't mind pointing that out. Today, we sit at 23, so obviously I say to the minister, the Liberal government has a lot of work to do to get us back to number one. I wish you well with that because I wish we were number one again in mining. It would be great for the economy.

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At this time, I'd like to also highlight the work of the Ontario Mining Association, in particular the So You Think You Know Mining annual contest for high school students. It's a tremendous initiative that helps educate a new generation on the opportunities presented in the mining sector. Open to high school students across the province, these annual awards reward creative videos that tell the positive story of mining in Ontario. I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the 2016 awards in June.

We in the PC caucus appreciate the value that mining provides. Whether it's through getting electricity rates under control or improving the process of approvals and permitting, we believe more can be done to champion our mining sector. Ontario has a rich history, and again, I look forward to—along with, I'm sure, all members of the Legislature—making Ontario the number one mining jurisdiction in the world again.

In closing, I look forward to the 37th annual mining day tomorrow, and meeting with the Ontario Mining Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. Michael Mantha: First, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that tomorrow is, again, Meet the Miners Day here at Queen's Park. It is a great opportunity to meet people in the industry and learn of their ongoing projects, and the importance and contributions of mining both in our country and in our great province.

Over the last few years, I've had the opportunity to tour many mines across Ontario, and I've brought the industry's concerns back here to the Legislature, to our caucus and to our leader. Mining plays such an important role in our economy. It fuels cities and drives employment. As many of you know, as MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin and also critic for northern development and mines for the NDP, so many of my constituents—of our constituents—across this province we represent, so many of our families I know and so many of the workers in our communities work in the mining industry and resource development. I look forward to meeting with many of you at your reception, and over the coming months and years as we work together. I encourage all of my colleagues here at the Legislature to welcome the many delegations that will be going through our offices, and also to come by and enjoy the evening.

While the mining industry makes enormous contributions in many sectors in our society, we often hear about the struggles they are facing. Year after year, we hear of your struggles of inadequate infrastructure, lack of framework and high energy costs, making it difficult to operate in this province. With the government's plan to sell off Hydro One, I have no doubt that the mining industry is concerned for what this will mean for the future investment, operations, processing and manufacturing opportunities.

After a lack of action on the Ring of Fire and countless other mining projects in our province, and a vague announcement of creating a development corporation, this Liberal government gave itself a deadline of 60 days to create that corporation, which was to include partners in industry and in First Nations. What the government produced in order to meet its self-imposed deadline was a board comprised of five government bureaucrats sitting at a table all by themselves. I really haven't seen anything else coming forward from this corporation.

On a more positive note, New Democrats are encouraged that the government is accepting the recommendations of the mining health and safety review. We, alongside the United Steelworkers and the group Mining Inquiry Needs Everyone's Support, have been front and centre in calling for major changes to how mines in Ontario are regulated and made safe. Changes that will improve safety in the mines are welcome. There have been 11 deaths since 2007; another seven last year. Last week, the death of Richard Pigeau at the Glencore Nickel Rim was a stark reminder that toughened rules that may prevent injuries and deaths in the future are badly needed and long, long overdue.

This government has failed to bring industry together. They have failed to bring First Nations together. The facts speak for themselves. Industry is unable to continue working under these conditions. Some have left, taking good jobs with them elsewhere. Other companies are fighting our own government in our court system.

When it comes to First Nations, the minister claims they reached a historic agreement with the chiefs of the Matawa tribal council that lays the groundwork for future discussions. Meanwhile, Matawa chiefs have publicly expressed concern that the provincial government is violating this agreement when it excludes them from the development corporation board and is not consulting them on mining permits in the Ring of Fire.

Despite these facts, the minister says his government is proud of the work they have accomplished so far. Northerners, First Nations and industry, Mr. Speaker, need less rhetoric from this government and more action to get shovels in the ground in the Ring of Fire and across the vast potential mining projects that we have in Ontario. Thousands of jobs for communities across the north depend on it.

I thank industry folks for coming to meet up with us. My colleagues and I look forward to meeting with you and your colleagues, supporting your projects and working together to create the much-needed jobs this province needs. I thank everyone for joining and coming out to meet the miners tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

SAUBLE BEACH LAND CLAIM

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are serious concerns with the government's policy involving third-parties named in land claim disputes in Ontario, namely the Sauble Beach land claim;

"Whereas the government of Ontario and the government of Canada have equally failed to include protection of the third-parties named in this land claim dispute, specifically they have abandoned any responsibility in honouring crown patent grants and in the case of Ontario, honouring the land registry system;

"Whereas there is no indication that any effort is being made to protect the interest of the public or third-parties named in the Sauble Beach land claim dispute;

"Whereas the current process concerning the dissemination of information to third-parties named in this land claim dispute is deeply flawed;

"Whereas there is no consultation with the third parties as to crown land planning and decision-making nor any engagement in a process that must be open as per the MNRF's publicly stated principles on land negotiations;

“Whereas third parties named in the land claim should be consulted and their concerns should be reflected in negotiations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“To review its guiding principles for land claim negotiations and the respective roles of Canada and Ontario in settling claims in an effort to enhance protection of third-parties and all citizens affected by land disputes, to provide open communication and accountability to all pertinent stakeholders, and to provide appropriate financial support to ensure this matter is dealt with in a fair and timely manner.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Cameron.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank Mrs. Marlene Turner from Manitouwadge, who always takes the time to present me with these petitions. It reads:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page John to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has brought forward a payroll tax in the form of a mandatory Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP); and

“Whereas the Liberal government has not conducted nor released a cost-benefit analysis of this new payroll tax; and

“Whereas internal Ministry of Finance documents show that the Liberals are aware that the ORPP will increase the cost of doing business in Ontario and kill jobs in the province; and

“Whereas a McKinsey and Co. survey shows that more than four out of every five Canadians already have enough for their retirement; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has stated that a majority of its members would have to lay off workers; and

“Whereas the government’s plan would force the cancellation of many existing retirement plans that have better employer contribution rates; and

“Whereas low-income earners will have their retirement savings clawed back under this scheme; and

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“Whereas Ontarians cannot afford another tax on top of their already skyrocketing hydro bills and ever-increasing cost of living;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of an Ontario pension tax.”

I agree with this and I will send it down with page Gavin.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mme France Gélinas: I have these petitions that come from all over Ontario, and they read as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Julia to bring it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I too have quite a few petitions coming in from across the province.

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;”

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together

through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I affix my signature to this petition and hand it to page Shirley.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Privatizing Hydro: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for" future "generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Faith to deliver to the table.

EHLERS-DANLOS SYNDROME

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Canada Health Act requires provinces to fund medically necessary treatment for Canadians; and

"Whereas a growing number of people in Ontario suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) have to seek out-of-country treatment at their own expense because doctors in Ontario don't have the knowledge or skills to understand EDS symptoms and perform the required delicate and complicated surgeries; and

"Whereas those EDS victims who can't afford the expensive treatment outside of Ontario are forced to suffer a deteriorating existence and risk irreversible tissue and nerve damage; and

"Whereas EDS victims suffer severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, tremors, bowel and bladder issues, heart problems, mobility issues, digestive disorders, severe fatigue and many others resulting in little or very poor quality of life; and

"Whereas despite Ontario Ministry of Health claims that there are doctors in Ontario who can perform surgeries on EDS patients, when surgery is recommended the Ontario referring physicians fail to identify any Ontario neurosurgeon willing or able to see and treat the patient;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Require the Minister of Health to provide the names of Ontario neurosurgeons who can—and will—perform

surgeries on EDS patients with equivalent or identical skills to the EDS neurosurgeon specialists in the United States, and meet the Canada Health Act's requirement to afford equal access to medical treatment for patients, regardless of their ability to pay for out-of-country services."

I will send it with page Vanessa.

PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

M. Michael Mantha: J'ai une pétition à titre : Prix de l'essence.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l'Ontario continuent d'être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l'essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d'essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l'essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d'écart de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d'essence annualisés inférieurs;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'accorder à la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l'essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition, et je la présente au page John pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to

raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I agree with this and I will send it down with page Soham.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Joseph and Ginette Hayward in Levack in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service....; and

"Whereas," since 2009, "insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Marco to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is entitled Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community" drinking water "is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific" value;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to send it down with page Abby.

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SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have got a few hundred names here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government provided new funding to developmental service agencies across the province. These funds were to increase services, remove people from waiting lists and stabilize the development service sector. Community Living Elgin is reducing or limiting direct services for people with developmental disabilities. We see no stabilization of their agency!"

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Minister of Community and Social Services investigate and stabilize Community Living Elgin."

I agree with the petition, affix my signature on it and hand it over to Nicole.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This petition is from members in Manitouwadge and in Marathon.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I wholeheartedly agree with the petition and present it to page Marco to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

“Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

“Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

“Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

“We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with Soham.

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Friday, November 13, 2015; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come first-served basis; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, November 24, 2015; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 10 a.m. on Wednesday, November 25, 2015; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 26, 2015, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Thursday, November 26, 2015, at 2 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, November 30, 2015. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred, pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Gravelle has moved government notice of motion number 43.

Further debate?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is very much an important piece of legislation to all of us here in the Legislature. I think what makes it most important is that it will ensure that Ontarians are represented fairly in this Legislature, and what could be more important than that?

If passed, the Electoral Boundaries Act would create 15 new ridings in southern Ontario. This adjustment would be aligning with the federal electoral boundaries

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Monday, November 23, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Tuesday, November 24, 2015, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 115:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly’s website and Canada NewsWire; and

for southern Ontario that were put in place last year. We saw, in the most recent federal election, that they were indeed part of the new electoral reality. Increasing the number of ridings in these areas will ensure that this Legislature can better reflect the interests of those wonderfully diverse and very much flourishing regions of the province. So in that sense, those 15 extra ridings represent very much representation by population and how important it is. It's a core democratic principle. Certainly, that's the case.

We also need to ensure—and we feel very strongly about this, and I think there's agreement on all sides of the House—that there needs to be appropriate political representation in all parts of the province, and that obviously very much includes my part of the province: northern Ontario. Effective representation for northern Ontario would be maintained by retaining 11 seats in the north. This is something that all of us in the Legislature take seriously. Particularly those of us from the north may recall that, as redistribution took place the last couple of times, the number of seats was diminishing. We made a decision as the government to retain 11 seats, in the last piece of legislation, all across northern Ontario—again, something that's very, very important. That's why, again, us being able to retain the 11 seats in northern Ontario is very important.

I'm one of the members who has the great honour and privilege of representing a large northern riding: Thunder Bay-Superior North. I think that geographically it's only the fourth-largest riding in the province. Certainly as someone who is absolutely so grateful to have the opportunity to represent my constituents, I know, very much, what it's like to have a riding where you are frequently travelling 200 kilometres or 300 kilometres to go to an event and returning the same day for that reason. I'm very grateful that the Attorney General, who has put this legislation together, and our government continues to support maintaining these 11 ridings—unlike the federal boundaries, which means that there are only 10 federal ridings.

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With the exception of retaining these 11 seats in the north, which, again, I am very pleased that we are putting in this legislation, the boundaries here reflect very much those set out by the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission, which was done after extremely extensive consultations. I know it's the case that all parties in this Legislature have stated that they will be supporting this bill during second reading.

I will, actually, if I may, use some quotes that were offered to us in second reading by a number of the members. The member from London West stated: "New Democrats support the changes that are proposed in this bill. We are fully supportive of ensuring that people who live in northern Ontario continue to have a strong voice in the provincial Legislature."

Also during second reading debate, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington stated: "We're in favour of the bill. We're in favour; that's what

it was all about. We've said very clearly that we're in favour of changing the riding boundaries. I haven't heard anybody opposed to it, and I'm sure I won't."

Let me reference one other, if I may, Mr. Speaker. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton stated: "I think it's important to note that this is a good step forward and something that's necessary. The federal government moved on this, and naturally we needed to address this issue as well, so I'm happy to see the government doing this. This is not a controversial issue, so this is something, certainly, we support and will be supporting once it comes to the vote."

What I'd like to submit is that, with all-party support for second reading, I think it is time that we move forward with Bill 115 and bring it before a committee. Certainly, we want to continue to move forward with some very important legislation here in the Ontario Legislature.

In June of 2014, the voters in the province sent a very clear message. They certainly made it clear they wanted our government to get on with the business of governing in their best interests. Certainly, in terms of this bill, there has been considerable debate on this bill and the ideas that have been brought forward in this bill. We have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives, so I think it's fair to say that I believe it's time that we do end second reading and refer the bill to committee.

Clearly, committee is an important part of that process, Mr. Speaker. I think we all agree on that. This is where stakeholders will have the opportunity to present their views. We will be able to hear directly from the public, related to their thoughts on this particular legislation. May I say also, in committee, as the members of this House know well, they will have an opportunity to move amendments to the bill.

At the same time, I think that will allow us to move to substantive debate on other matters that are before the Legislature. There truly are a number of important pieces of legislation that have been already introduced which the government would very much like to debate in the House and move through the legislative process. I think, later this afternoon, we are going to be bringing forward the debate on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act; I believe that will be our next order of business. Other pieces of legislation that we want to move forward with: Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act; Bill 132, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act; and Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

We really would like to spend some time to debate some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, we cannot do that until Bill 115, the legislation related to electoral boundaries, is dealt with. Again, I certainly sit here as a member who is very strongly supportive of this legislation and am very pleased that, again, it really does reflect the needs of this province, particularly from a northern Ontario perspective, considering the challenges that those of us who are fortunate enough to represent

northern ridings work with on a daily basis, and look forward to that.

I urge all members in this House to support this motion and help pass this bill as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I should start off by saying, much to the minister's chagrin, probably, we will be speaking and debating the time allocation motion on Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act.

I should also, as many members in the House should, pay tribute to our staff members, who do a lot of work in preparing for the members' remarks. In my office, my assistant Jena prepared and did a lot of research on some parliamentary traditions.

I'd like to read a document that was prepared by the parliamentary library, The Opposition in a Parliamentary System. It says this:

"Parliament, after all, is fundamentally about debate—‘rhetoric’ in the classical Greek sense—and the transacting of the people’s business in public. It is also about the right to dissent in a civilized manner. Genuine political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy, tolerance, and trust in the ability of citizens to resolve differences by peaceful means. The existence of an opposition, without which politics ceases and administration takes over, is indispensable to the functioning of parliamentary political systems. If these systems are perceived as not working well—as being ‘seriously overloaded,’ to quote a distinguished Canadian opposition leader, the Hon. Robert Stanfield—it may be the rights of political oppositions which are immediately and most visibly at stake, but ultimately the threat is to democratic rights and freedom generally. The following paper is an attempt to come to grips with the “changing and “challenging nature of the opposition’s role in Parliament, specifically in the Canadian context.” I’ll go into more detail about this document pulled from the parliamentary library.

But Mr. Speaker, yet again, here we are debating another time allocation motion under the Liberal government. We keep seeing these time allocation motions in this House. The ministers are taking turns to stand and insist that there is a pressing need to cut off debate and move the legislation of the day forward with all urgency. The truth is, this is either a case of the government wanting to stifle debate in this House or it's a case of poor planning on the government's part.

Given that this government has been in power for well over a decade, there's no excuse to be introducing legislation like this without enough time for full debate. The bill we're talking about today, Bill 115, sets out to mirror the federal boundaries that were established in 2011. This didn't happen a few months ago; in fact, I think it happened about five years ago. If the Liberal government had a deadline in mind for when this legislation needed to be passed, they should have made it a priority and brought it forward in a timely way. That is the responsibility of government. Poor planning is not an

excuse to distort the legislative process by pushing through overdue bills with these time allocation motions.

I want to be clear, and I know the members on the opposite side understand this: The Ontario PC caucus supports this bill, because the people of this province deserve to be fairly represented. We're speaking in the strongest terms against the excessive use of time allocation motions for the same reason. This government loves to say how great it is to consult and have conversations with everyone about everything, right up until it's public debate in this House. Conversation behind closed doors does not make for an open and transparent government. The democratic process is about having unfettered debate in this very chamber, with every elected member of provincial Parliament having the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people who sent them here.

Bill 115 upholds the democratic principle of fair representation by reflecting the population shifts of the province of Ontario so that each elected member here represents an equal constituency as they work on behalf of the people of Ontario. That work should not be tempered by the allocation of debate time, which leads to only a token few members from each party weighing in on particular legislation—in this case, Bill 115.

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In this case, again, we are in favour of this bill. We have said very clearly that we are in favour of changing the riding boundaries to more or less mirror the changes made at the federal level. I don't think anyone is opposed to this, because it makes a lot of sense; it will make it easier for our constituents, who have to navigate three levels of government. But we do have further suggestions and recommendations that the government could contemplate and consider incorporating in these statutes that they are visiting and revising.

We don't often get perfect bills coming through this House. Debating bills, even ones that enjoy support from all parties here, is an invaluable part of the process, because it provides the opportunity to sharpen and polish a particular piece of legislation. When everyone has the opportunity to speak to a bill, we can get a better perspective on the bill and a better appreciation of its actual implications. There is valuable insight that comes from the debate we have here, but taking this “parent knows best” approach and not even bothering to hear what members in this House have to say is not conducive to good governance.

The work done in committee is, of course, critical as well, and it is unfortunately another casualty of this government's agenda. This government is prone to limiting the amount of time a bill will be in committee. We don't generally see more than a few days of hearings and clause-by-clause, and then the bill is back here for a couple of hours of debate at third reading.

When you remove scrutiny from this process, Mr. Speaker, you end up with shoddy legislation. When you end up with shoddy legislation, valuable time and resources are used up down the road, trying to go back to resolve the problems you have created.

This government is not demonstrating respect for our parliamentary system. The people of this province who elected opposition members still expect that their voices will be heard. They have every right to expect that, but this government seems ready to write them off. In this system, the majority Liberal government can bring forward and pass whatever legislation they please. They have made it abundantly clear that they don't need to consider amendments put forward by the official opposition or the third party. When they start cutting off debate left, right and centre, they are basically saying that they intend to govern as if they have absolute rule of this province.

Mr. Speaker, there is a form of government where political authority is monopolized by a person or political entity that utilizes various mechanisms to ensure that the entity's power remains strong. But that isn't democracy. Yet that is the impression this government is beginning to leave with the people who sent all of us here as MPPs. They give us time for a few token members to speak, and then they shut down debate. These time allocation motions are a way to facilitate this government's aversion to working with the other parties.

This government has become the most closed in the history of the province of Ontario. Even Dalton McGuinty, when he got elected with a bigger majority than we see today, didn't shut down debate like this Premier's government. There was some respect for the role of the opposition and the value of co-operation. The goal of this government to continue to talk about openness and transparency is truly amazing, when it is clear that avoiding openness and transparency is the Liberals' number one priority.

When it comes to passing legislation, they cut off debate. In question period, it is all about not answering questions, whether it is about why they paid millions of dollars to teachers' unions or what kind of twisted math they are using to get to the conclusion that selling off Hydro One makes any kind of sense for the hard-working taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

In a democracy, you can't just say whatever you want to get elected and throw it all out the door when you get into office. This Premier promised the people of this province openness and transparency. Mr. Speaker, it's what she owes them. Yet we see closed doors, police investigations, debates cut short, committees that are open to very limited public input and no financial statements to justify how millions in taxpayer dollars were spent.

Accountability is eroding under this Premier. The watchdogs of this province are ignored and have found that they can't trust this Liberal government. Our Financial Accountability Officer had a report leaked just last week and found that the government was not forthcoming with information he needed for his report. In fact, he said the government refused to show him its calculations and the financial effect of selling Hydro One.

Beyond that, our Auditor General has been subject to demeaning comments from a minister of this government. This government has also asked for more wiggle

room when it comes to what constitutes a partisan government advertisement. I could go on and on and on with examples.

I ask the members on the other side of this House: Are you okay with this? Are you fine with being associated with a government that operates this way? A recent article characterized this government by saying that some of their recent actions suggest that "the Liberals have lost any hint of rectitude when it comes to the handling of public money—though they did do their best to hide the transaction." I'll repeat that: "they did do their best to hide the transaction."

What part of this is in the best interests of the people of this province? It's actually extremely ironic that we're discussing a time allocation motion for a bill that we support because it is about fair representation. We want the electoral boundaries of this province to better reflect the principle that every vote is equal and every vote counts. When we have variances in population, riding by riding, of up to 100,000 people, the value of a single vote can change pretty dramatically.

The ability of a single vote to influence the result in a riding of 50,000 is much greater than a vote in a riding with 150,000 people. After election time, the time and resources of a member will be spread much more thinly in a riding with 150,000 people. Unfortunately, it's becoming apparent that if you voted for someone who isn't in this Premier's government, the likelihood that your elected representative will be able to speak on your behalf in the Legislature is greatly diminished as well.

I believe it was the Attorney General, if memory serves me correctly, who supported this bill with the comment that it is to address inadequacies in our representation. I would say that another inadequacy in representation would be the repeated use of these time allocation motions.

I would also like to say that if the government really and truly had convictions and was committed to improving representation, I think we would be discussing changes to third-party advertising and spending in elections. I would think that the government would be making that a real priority, given the uncomfortable questions they are having to answer these days about how many millions of dollars they were given by entities that got millions out of the public purse for unspecified expenses.

Bill 115 is essentially a copy-and-paste job of the federal legislation, with a few variances in northern Ontario. They want to think about doing something similar for third-party advertising. I thank the Attorney General for bringing it forward, but it is a small part of what needs to be done in the greater scheme of things.

Again, we support this bill because the people of this province deserve to be fairly represented. We're speaking in the strongest terms against these time allocation motions for the same reason. This is the second week in a row that I'm speaking to a time allocation motion, and I know a number of members are doing the same. I hope that the streak doesn't get extended. If this government

continues to escalate their usage of the motions, I'm not sure what the role of opposition at Queen's Park will be.

I have an amendment to add. I move that the motion be amended by striking out everything following the second paragraph up to and including, "Monday, November 30, 2015," and replacing it with the following:

"That the committee be authorized to meet on Wednesday, November 25, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Ottawa; and on Thursday, November 26, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m. in Thunder Bay, for the purpose of public hearings on the bill;

"That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 115:

"Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

"That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Friday, November 13, 2015; and

"That following the deadline, the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the committee with a list of requests to appear; and

"That a member from all three recognized parties prioritize and return the list by 6 p.m. on Friday, November 13, 2015; and

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"That the Clerk of the Committee schedule witnesses from these prioritized lists; and

"That each witness will receive up to 15 minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

"That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2015; and

"That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Friday, November 27, 2015; and

"That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, November 30, 2015, at its regularly scheduled time for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

"On Monday, November 13, 2015, at 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

"That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, December 2, 2015."

I'll send this to the Clerks' table with the page. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. McNaughton has moved an amendment to the motion—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Dispense? Dispense.

Further debate? We're now debating the amendment to the motion. I recognize the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Imagine that: We're time-allocating a bill that is going to deal with a riding redistribution that doesn't take effect until two and a half years from now. What's the government in a hurry about in passing this bill through the House? Why is it having to do this by way of time allocation?

I'm sure if there was an opportunity for having public hearings around the province—and that's what this motion is trying to do. It's trying to allow some public hearings to happen outside of Toronto. Normally, the way that would be done is that, in the intersession, there would be some time allocated for hearings and then the subcommittee would decide with a motion in committee where it is they're going to travel to around the province to deal with this issue. Because there are issues with this particular bill that members want to speak to, but, more importantly, that the public wants to speak to in regard to which parts of which ridings should be changed, which community should be part of what riding etc.

There's a number of other issues that would need to be dealt with, and it would be in keeping for this bill to do some travelling. But how do you do that when a government brings forward a bill to do riding redistribution and then says, "We have to have time allocation because—darn—it's so important to pass this bill before the House rises before Christmas"—that the world is going to come to an end, even though the ridings are not going to be affected until the next election.

You've got two and a half years till the next election. Why is the government in such a rush to pass this bill? One can only conclude that it's because they're getting used to doing everything by time allocation motion. The member just previous spoke to that and said that, more and more, we see governments relying on the rules of time allocation, more so than ever before. What's now happening is that the government's not even in the mode of having a discussion with the opposition parties to say, "What bills do you support? Which ones would you be prepared to allow to happen at a natural sort of evolution of a couple of days of debate and then into committee for some public hearings? What bills do you have strong objections on?"—and allow those bills with strong objections to have a little bit more time in the House, to have some fuller debate and to allow some public hearings to happen. You can't even have those discussions because the government, quite frankly, is doing most of everything by time allocation.

I'll say what I've said here before, and that other members have repeated in this House. If the government thinks it's clever in bringing forward time allocation as some sort of grand strategy for moving their agenda forward, let me remind them of one fact: They won a majority government in the last election. They're going to win every vote in this House, so in the end, you're going to get your agenda. It's a question of how quickly you are going to get the agenda.

I will argue that, at this point, from what I can see on the order paper, the vast majority of what's on the order paper the opposition parties would have not have a problem giving to the government, in some sort of a quick method, to allow some public hearings, because the public may have some issues with some of these bills. But we, in no way, shape or form, as an opposition, would be party to filibustering those bills if we had some sort of an agreement with the government to say, "Okay, here are the one or two bills that we're more interested in and that we think the public needs to have more time to consider and some more time in committee. So let's make a deal to allow that to happen in exchange for those bills that have less opposition to move more quickly through the process."

Now, that's not to say there wouldn't be committee hearings. I will argue that a bill should always go to committee. It should always have an opportunity to give the public some debate. I think there are very few cases where you don't need to do that. For example, sending a bill to Committee of the Whole was not the exception in this place at one time; it was the norm. But even at that time there was an opportunity for public hearings. It just referred itself back to Committee of the Whole for amendments, rather than doing clause-by-clause in committee. But that's a whole other debate.

The point is this. If the government House leader and the Premier's office were to come to the conclusion that, "You know what? The opposition has a role in the House, as does the government," the government proposes legislation, and we in the opposition then look at that legislation, and we either support it or we oppose it, based on what the bill is. As I said, as we look at the order paper, which is pretty thin gruel, by the way—there's not a lot on this order paper, considering that this is a majority government—most of what's on the order paper could be supported by the opposition in exchange for some hearings on some of the bills.

On this particular bill, in regard to the issue of changing electoral boundaries to resemble the federal boundaries that we just went through in the last federal election, yeah, I think there is some debate that needs to be had, and I think the public would like to have their say. The member kind of touched on it in his comments: It is an opportunity to have a little bit of a discussion about our democracy and whether our democracy works and what, quite frankly, can be changed to make it better.

I'll just give you this one reality: A number of us here—actually, a number of those who happen to be around me today in the House—represent northern ridings. As a result of redistribution, the percentage of seats in this House for northern Ontario will go down, because the seats in the rest of the province are going up. We're going to be up to 122—

Mr. John Vanthof: We're adding 15.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're adding 15 seats, all of which are going to be in areas of growth in southern Ontario. I don't begrudge growth in southern Ontario. I agree that you have to allow more seats to better repre-

sent those people and those areas where the population is increasing. That is not my argument; that is just a reality. The problem we have in the north is that we in the north—and I will argue the same for rural Ontario—become less and less a percentage of this House. As a result, the make-up of the House is that the urban centres—I think specifically of Toronto and Ottawa, being the two biggest ones—end up becoming pretty predominant in the House.

Now, I'm not arguing for one second that Toronto shouldn't have more seats; obviously they have to. But there has got to be some way of balancing off those voices in northern Ontario and rural Ontario so that they feel they are having their voices heard and the percentage of seats in those particular areas is not diminished to the point where the number of seats becomes rather minuscule compared to what it used to be.

When I was first elected to this House, the House was 130 seats. Guess what? We had 15 members from northern Ontario in a 130-seat House. We're down to, what, 103?

M^{me} France Gélinas: One hundred and seven.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's 107 now? Yeah, it has changed a couple of times. So 107, and we're down to 10 seats in northern Ontario. Aside from what that means for servicing ridings like Algoma-Manitoulin or Nickel Belt or Timmins-James Bay or Timiskaming-Cochrane or Kenora-Rainy River—my God, there's another big one—my point is that the issue, for the people of northern Ontario, is that the voice becomes lesser because there are fewer seats compared to the rest of the province.

Why wouldn't you allow this bill—this particular bill—to travel into northern Ontario? The member, in his amendment, somewhat touches on that by saying there should be some hearings in Thunder Bay.

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I want to point out the map of Ontario. If you take a look at the map of Ontario, when you flip it around, the scale has changed. Southern Ontario shows about that big on one side of the map, and then you flip it around and northern Ontario looks about the same. No, it doesn't work that way. The scale is different. It's a huge part of the province. My riding alone, Timmins-James Bay, is larger than France. Vive la patrie, I say. But my point is, if we go to Thunder Bay, there's a whole other part of Ontario—northern Ontario—that is not being heard. I understand what the member is trying to do and I'm not trying to take away from what the member tried to do with this amendment. But my point is, by the government time-allocating this bill in the way that they have, saying one day of hearings in—where, again?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Toronto.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, Toronto again. Somehow, I'm surprised. Yet again, this bill is not going to travel. It's going to stay here in the Legislature. If someone sitting up in Peawanuck, Ontario, who is represented by Kenora-Rainy River, who's probably more easily serviced through Timmins-James Bay, or someone in Wahnapitae or somebody in—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Manitouwadge.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Manitouwadge or someone up in Kenora wants to come down and have something to say, it's a pretty big deal to get down here. It's not as if you can just, all of a sudden, jump on the subway and you're down here in five minutes in order to give your presentation and go back. If you're up in northwestern Ontario or northeastern Ontario, you have got to probably come down the day before, which means to say you're going to, at least, miss two days of work, in order to get a five-minute spot to speak to a bill of which, in that five minutes, someone is going to be asking you questions. It doesn't leave you a lot of time. I just say to the government across the way, you're not doing democracy any good by time-allocating a bill on riding redistribution.

A bill like this, properly put, I would argue, should have some ability to travel. How do you determine travel? I think it's a pretty simple thing. You advertise that the bill is in committee. Anybody interested and willing to present, just put your names towards. If you have got a bunch of names in Thunder Bay or Wahnapitae or wherever it might be, then the bill travels to those areas. If there is nobody from those areas who is, in fact, saying they are prepared to present to committee, well then, you don't need to go there.

Here's what has happened, though. When I was first elected in 1990, bills used to travel for at least two weeks. There was hardly a bill that didn't go into committee in either the summer or winter intercession and travel around the province for two weeks. The committee would get together and they would say, "Okay, where are we going?" If there was a bill like this, I would argue that a bill like this probably would have got two weeks of hearings. It probably would have travelled to three, maybe four places in northern Ontario—maybe three, maybe four, depending on the committee membership and the demand—and the rest of the time travelled throughout the rest of Ontario, except for Toronto, because you would do your committee hearings here in Toronto when the House was sitting. Anybody who lived in and around Toronto and wanted to come and present came to the Legislature—as you well know, Mr. Speaker. You were elected to the same Parliament as I, whatever Parliament number that was—

Interjection: It was 35.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay. It is a good thing you know these things—the 35th Parliament. People would get a chance to come and present at the Legislature, while the House was in session. You would have multiple days where those bills were available here in the House, while the House was in session. Then, we'd go off and we would travel and hear from Ontarians when it came to what it is the bill had to do.

I'm sure this bill, because I know there are members who want to speak to this, needs some form of amendment. There are some legitimate issues that I think the public has with riding redistribution that should be heard. For example, it was the idea of Mike Harris to mirror the federal ridings. Mr. Speaker, unlike you, I voted against

that when it first came into the House, because I thought it was a bad idea. A member's job provincially is very different than a member's job federally. I look at my good friend, Madame Meilleur, who represents the riding of Vanier—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ottawa–Vanier.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —who represents the riding of Ottawa–Vanier. She probably deals with more stuff in her constituency office than her federal counterpart does, because we're responsible for health care, we're responsible for education, we're responsible for transportation and we're responsible for municipalities. We're even responsible for some—about half of what's on First Nations is provincial as well. We tend to get a lot more work at the provincial level than the federal member does. I don't begrudge that, even though they're paid more than us, which is the irony of it all, but that's a whole other story. We signed up for the job, so we knew; I'm not going to begrudge that. But my point is that I never accepted our ridings should do the same as the federal government, because we represent different issues and more issues than our federal counterparts. So trying to run a constituency office in Ottawa–Vanier or Algoma–Manitoulin with three and a half staff with the money we have, given how much we have to do as far as the various issues we're responsible for, is a very different thing than my federal counterpart.

I'm lucky. I have two federal New Democrats in my riding: Carol Hughes, Algoma–Manitoulin–Kapuskasing—talk about a really big riding; that's a big one—and Charlie Angus in Timmins–James Bay. We share offices, both in Kapuskasing and in Timmins, and I get to see, on a daily basis, based on the reports that I get from my constituency staff, and when I'm there, who does what. They get a lot of work. They get a lot of passports. They get a lot of immigration stuff. Surprisingly, a lot of immigration comes through those offices. They get some CPP stuff. They get some stuff on FedNor; they get some FedNor stuff.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Canada Revenue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Canada Revenue—there's no question. They get a fairly large volume from that, but they're not as large and complex as some of the files that we deal with at the provincial level.

For example, I just came out of a ministry—

M^{me} France Gélinas: FRO.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's that?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Family Responsibility Office.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The FRO.

I just came out of a briefing of the Ministry of Health in regard to the hospital in Attawapiskat. We've been dealing with a diesel spill in Attawapiskat since last December, and I'm going to say here publicly, and I've said it on the radio before: The government has done a good job in dealing with that spill in Attawapiskat. The minister has been pretty stellar.

But we've had to work our way through with WAHA, which is the Weeneebayko hospital, with the Attawapiskat First Nation and others—working our way through,

doing the cleanup of that spill. The amount of hours I've put in and my staff have put in, dealing with WAHA, dealing with the minister, dealing with the ministry, dealing with Attawapiskat—and we do it gladly; it's part of what we do—is quite a bit of work. My argument is, when you have ridings that are as big as the federal boundaries and we have essentially the same resources—actually, less resources than our federal cousins when it comes to supporting our constituency offices—I don't think it makes a lot of sense.

I would much rather have the system we had before, where we were 15 members in northern Ontario. Our ridings were much more manageable, and it allowed us, with the amount of staff that we had, which is essentially the same as it is now, to deal with our constituency issues. God, I'm dealing with a riding the size of France. Even the French government is bigger than me, I must say. So it doesn't make sense to have that.

Why not have an opportunity for people to go to Thunder Bay, as the member argues in his amendment to this motion, and allow people to have a say: Should our boundaries provincially be the same as the boundaries federally? I will argue no. I think they should be different. If you look at every other Legislature in Canada, the boundaries are smaller than the federal boundaries except for Ontario, and there's a reason for that: We're busier. We deal with more things. We're responsible for the day-to-day, everything from forest allocation—how many times in our constituencies do we deal with forestry companies that are having difficulty, especially the smaller ones, the independent family ones, to be able to deal with having access to the forest? They don't deal with that federally; we deal with that provincially. Dealing with health issues, education issues, the Family Responsibility Office—you name it. There are all kinds of it. If you had hearings, you'd have an opportunity to at least speak to those particular issues as a constituent in northern Ontario or a constituent anywhere else in the province.

The other thing that I think you need to take a look at is that it would allow us to deal with a couple of other really fundamental issues and something that I've long felt, and that is the issue of First Nations. Look around this House. Is there anybody who's a First Nations member in this House? No, not one, and I'm not blaming the government. I'm not blaming the opposition. It's just a fact of our electoral system. Our electoral system makes it that in fact there's very little in the way of representation of First Nations in this House. So I argue: Why don't we, in the hearings—if you had hearings across Ontario to look at representation and size of ridings, why couldn't we have a discussion about what we need to do with boundaries in order to encourage First Nations members to be elected to this Legislature? Who better to respond to First Nations issues than somebody from the First Nations community, somebody who has walked the walk and talked the talk, who gets what it's all about? But it's hard to do in this current electoral system.

If you look at the New Zealand model, which is quite interesting—mind you, they're a PR model—they've actually put into their structure through the constitution a mechanism by which First Nations communities are represented by way of their own membership in their federal Legislature. It's not a bad concept, and I think it's something that we need to look at.

Now, it's hard to do, and I'm the first to accept that it would take some pretty heavy lifting to be able to deal with this issue, but, God, we have to start the conversation somewhere. I listen to Premier Wynne saying she wants to have a conversation with Ontarians. How about a conversation with First Nations about how they're able to find a way to increase their representation in the—

Interjections.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, here's the government saying, "Come on; come on."

What's wrong with a conversation on representation on the part of the First Nations? That's all I'm saying. I'm not saying it's your fault. I'm not saying it's anybody's fault. It's a problem that has existed in this province since Confederation. I'm saying, if we can't have a discussion about these types of issues, then I think it doesn't serve democracy well and it doesn't serve First Nations. You shouldn't, as government members, feel that you own this problem. You didn't invent this problem. It was there before you got there—I'm the first to admit it—but you have an opportunity to start the discussion. That's all I'm saying.

The Premier—and I agree with her—says we need to have a conversation with Ontarians on all kinds of issues. I agree with that. I think we should have that conversation, but you can't have a conversation when you time-allocate legislation, where you don't give the opposition the opportunity to come to committee within their own communities to talk about the issues that are important to them.

Tell me who in Peawanuck, who in Fort Severn, who in Big Trout Lake or who in Kashechewan is going to Toronto to speak to this issue. You're not going to find anybody.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How are you going to get there? An airline ticket out of Peawanuck to Timmins is about a thousand bucks. Then you have to get on a plane, and you have to fly down to Toronto.

My point is, what's wrong with us, when we have bills such as this, saying, let's have the opportunity to at least start having this discussion? You may not fix it through this bill; I'm the first to admit that some of these issues are outside the scope of this bill to a degree. But sometimes we utilize committees in order to start these discussions, so that we can try to figure out how to address this in such a way so that the legacy we leave our children is not the legacy that we inherited. That's all we're doing here: We're just passing on from one Parliament to another the same problems by not dealing with it.

So, when the member moves his amendment and says he wants the bill to travel, take it for what it is. There's a

genuine need in a democracy for the public to be heard. Governments and legislatures should never be afraid to hear what the public has to say, even when what they say may not be very nice towards the politician or the political party that's proposing the change of whatever it might be.

Most of you around here who have been lucky enough to be re-elected are here because you did some listening, right? I look at my friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines across the way. I'm sure you've had people come to your constituency office mad as heck. What do you do? You hear what they have to say. You listen. That's what it's all about, and hopefully you take some action. Even if you don't take action and you try, they say, "Well, at least I was heard, and he tried." It should be the same with committee. It should be the concept of, the public has the right to say; the public has a right to participate in our democratic process.

A wonderful thing about the British parliamentary system—how did they get this system right? It's always a source of fascination for me, because, you have to remember, this system was built out of a monarchy that, at the time, had all of the power. You go back and look at some of the biggest tyrants or kings in the history of Britain, and they just did it on their own and didn't listen to anybody, until some people decided, "Ah, we want to give our Parliament some real teeth." They developed this parliamentary system that allows the public to have their say. One of the things that they invented is brilliant, when you think about it. They said, "We will travel our Parliaments around the country, so that people have a right to present to the legislators what it is that they're preoccupied with." It's pretty smart, when you think about it. How did that all happen? It happened because there was a recognition by parliamentarians some years ago that the public has to be part of a democracy. The public has to be part of a parliamentary system. The way that you do that is by way of committee.

Now, I will argue strongly that committee should not just be about having hearings in Toronto. Toronto is a wonderful city. I think we're probably one of the luckiest countries in the world because Toronto is probably one of the best cities in the world, as far as a place to live and as far as what the city has to offer, its diversity, and just overall as a city. But this is a large province, and this province is a great place as well. We need to listen to the people in other parts of the province who also want to have their say when it comes to legislation, such as amending legislation having to do with boundaries. So I say again, because I know a couple of members—I've probably gone on far longer than I should have, but I wanted to make the point that the parliamentary process should be that we actually do have travel on committee, and that we do, in fact, allow people to have their say outside of this place and into the communities of Ontario.

The last point I will make, and I'll repeat what I said at the very beginning: Why is the government time-allocating a bill that deals with boundaries and that is not going to take effect until two and a half years from now?

Why was the government in such a hurry? What's the point? What's the winning side of that one and what's the logic? If anybody can tell me why it was so important that you had to time-allocate this bill by the month of November, please tell me. I'm just a lowly guy from Timmins; I don't know a heck of a lot. I'm sure there's somebody in the Premier's office who's going to explain this to me. There are two and a half years to the next election. The government could have gone out on the road in the intersession, which would have been February or January sometime, heard some people, heard what they had to say, taken the good ideas, amended their legislation and then gone forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing what the government has to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the amendment to the motion?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure for me to speak today. I think one of the key tenets, and probably the last comment that I heard my colleague from the NDP say, is they've had lots of time. They could have taken it. They could have had a lot more consultation. That's what my colleague from—Monte, what's your riding again?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Bill Walker: Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. I wanted to use my colleague Jeff Yurek's Elgin—Middlesex—London. I knew I was getting those two mixed up. But Monte McNaughton, the fine member, has brought that up. He's always wanting to ensure that the people of Ontario have a fair shake.

The member from Timmins: I already referenced you, but I will put Timmins back into my speaking remarks as well.

Interjection: Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Bill Walker: Timmins—James Bay. The size of France, I believe—the size of his riding. So you need lots of opportunity to consult. You need Ontarians to have their say. That's the key with all of the legislation. That's what I try to do when I come here to represent the great people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound: bring their voice to Queen's Park and vice versa—take information that impacts them back from here to the riding.

It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act. Maybe it would be a repetition in a way, but just so the people at home know, we're going to be adding 15 new ridings, increasing the size of the Legislature to 122 members from the current 107. Northern Ontario will continue to follow the boundaries set out in 2004.

It's important, I believe, to update the districts as the population grows to ensure that we have representative democracy, to allow for equal representation. It will continue, from my understanding, to mirror the federal electoral boundaries. I have only ever known, since I came here in 2011, to share the same riding with my counterpart Larry Miller, who I want to commend for being re-elected with a great majority again in this election to represent the people of Bruce—Grey—Owen

Sound in Ottawa. We've only ever shared those same boundaries, and I think it's a good thing, from that perspective, that the people of our riding are not confused. They know we both represent exactly the same geographic area, the exact same municipalities and the exact same people on every issue that we both take to our respective Parliaments.

Some people, of course, may be unhappy with being moved into a different district, and that may happen. In our case, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is not going to change, so that's not a challenge, but certainly in lots of other parts of the province, that will happen. If someone has been part of a riding for a lot of time, and they happen to get moved because of a change of a map or an electoral boundary, I can understand that and appreciate that. But I think, at the end of the day, we have to always be about fairness and equal representation and democracy.

I will say, and probably most people out there will agree that it certainly isn't generally something that the public is excited or fond about—seeing more representatives added to Queen's Park or to the federal Parliament—but at the end of the day, that is what democracy is. We need to be able to ensure we have the size of a constituent base that we actually can represent effectively. If we become out of touch or they become too large, then that's not a good thing. Certainly, if we have a disparity of size of the people we're representing, that's not necessarily fairness either. So I think it's good to ensure that we do that.

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I like most parts of Bill 115 and am in agreement with most of the changes proposed to the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, as well as the Representation Act. Namely, I support streamlining our electoral districts with our federal counterparts, as I've already talked about, as it will be less confusing and ensures that people really do understand.

I'm sure you, Mr. Speaker, in your esteemed career here, have gone to the door where people still think you're the federal member, or they think an issue that's provincial is federal, or vice versa. I think the more that we can do to make sure that those are as simple and as consistent as possible, the better off we are for the benefit of the electorate, so that they understand even more.

I support organizing by district so that each of us has about 100,000 constituents. Allowing constituents to get better service from their elected official is a fair approach. In Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I currently serve about 106,000 residents. There's going to be a bit of a buffer on either side of that, but I think, generally, the intent of the expanded boundaries is to ensure that we all have relatively the same number of people. Certainly the size and geography is going to change. I have a relatively large riding compared to many in urban Ontario, certainly nothing like the member from Timmins-James Bay. But, at the end of day, I think what we want to do is make sure we have the same amount of people that we can represent.

My riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, as I said, will stay the same. It's fairly large. It stretches from the northern point at Tobermory, before you go off into northern Ontario on the Chi-Cheemaun ferry; the "big canoe," as we call it. To the south is Dundalk. It contains parts of Bruce and Grey counties; the Saugeen number 29 reserve; the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation; aboriginal reserve number 27; Fathom Five National Marine Park—again, a huge draw to the people and something that is well known across the world. It certainly has its own unique needs that we have to serve in that part of my riding.

It includes a lot of great communities. I'm not going to be able to name them all, but I do want to touch on a few of them: Owen Sound; Shallow Lake; Park Head; Hepworth—a big village of 400 people that I came from originally—Wiarton, Lion's Head, Tobermory, Hanover, Neustadt, Williamsford, Durham, Chatsworth, Holstein, Mount Forest, Clavering, Sauble Beach, Allenford, Mar, Pike Bay, Hope Bay, Howdenvale—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You sound like Johnny Cash.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a song. I'm going to put that into a song with an auctioneer's twist one of these days—Meaford, Rocklyn, Markdale, Flesherton, Dundalk, Maxwell, Feversham, and Priceville.

Just to share with people so that they understand, it's very dynamic, as all of you here understand—but maybe the people at home listening or who may read this later. In my case, I serve a number of municipalities: Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula, Arran-Elderslie, the town of Hanover, the municipality of West Grey, the township of Georgian Bluffs, municipality of Grey Highlands, the township of Chatsworth, the municipality of Meaford, the city of Owen Sound, the township of Southgate, as I mentioned earlier, the Chippewas of Nawash and Cape Croker First Nation reserves, and Grey and Bruce counties. It's another level of government in the middle of all that as well.

It's a very interesting dynamic. I think one of the things that we all have to know is that we are out to represent all of the people in all of those cases. We, of course, bring in the provincial perspective to those people.

The Liberal government had the opportunity to consider changes to the first-past-the-post system, but felt that the 2007 referendum on this issue answered that question. They're heeding the response, as the minister said in her leadoff.

I like the fact that with Bill 115 we're talking about reengaging voters and making efforts to boost voter participation in elections.

As I said before in the House, voter malaise and apathy is rising in Ontario. Consider the numbers as collected by Elections Ontario: Ontario used to enjoy a 65% turnout; by the 2003 election, a 57% turnout; in 2007, a 52% turnout; and in the 2011 election, a 48% turnout. It's going in the wrong direction, Mr. Speaker. The 2014 election saw a record high number of spoiled ballots: 31,399 Ontarians declined their votes in the last election, the highest rejection level since 1975.

Our election watchdog, Mr. Greg Essensa, recommended strengthening our election laws. Namely, he called on the government to cap third-party election advertising. He has been advocating for this change after seeing third-party advertising rise by 400% over the last seven years, from \$1.8 million in 2007 to \$8.6 million in 2014. Mr. Essensa said that Ontario needed new election advertising laws.

The government responded by promising “to beef it up.” I’m not really certain what that means, but I was hoping when I heard that that they meant they were truly going to be sincere and address it and make the changes to ensure that we’re all represented appropriately.

Interestingly, since the Premier made that promise, third-party advertising by the teachers’ unions and the millions in provincial payouts to the teachers’ unions have come under suspicion. Even the Toronto Star issued an editorial to say the same: “Premier Kathleen Wynne, take note: This is what comes from ignoring repeated calls over several years to tighten Ontario’s loose election rules. It’s the smell of scandal.”

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, on a point of order: The debate is about a closure motion, not about a number of other things. I would hope he’d come back to the subject.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Actually, we are debating the amendment to a government motion to place time allocation on a bill, but I would accept the member’s recommendation that we all need to be reminded from time to time about what we are debating. We’re debating the time allocation of this particular bill.

I return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to bring it back to the amendment. Part of what I am trying to do is put some context about the amendment, because my colleague certainly brought up that we need more time to debate. What I am trying to paint the picture of is how complex a situation it is: When you use time allocation, we don’t have the time that’s required to truly understand, debate and then create legislation that is truly going to serve the people at the end of day.

I’ll continue. The Star said that the “pattern of government payouts and election spending” by unions “gives rise to a perception” that taxpayer money “may have been spent in an effort to tilt the outcome” of provincial elections. Clearly, this government needs to clear the air now. But I don’t see any meaningful change with regard to fixing and capping third-party advertising in Bill 115, nor anything in line with the recommendations from the election watchdog, Greg Essensa, or what we hear from the general electorate.

If we do time-allocate, Mr. Speaker, it doesn’t give us the proper time to really go back to the public and ensure that we hear what they are saying. After all, we have to always ensure that what we’re doing here is representing their interests and their wishes. As such, I think this is where the Attorney General has failed.

The Attorney General said in her leadoff debate on Bill 115 that she was fixing third-party advertising rules. She said, “Finally, we will tackle the issue of third-party advertising. Ontario currently has rules in place to ensure transparency and free speech in our election campaigns. Third-party advertising rules were introduced in Ontario for the first time in 2007. Currently, third parties that spend \$500 or more on election advertising are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. They must also report to the Chief Electoral Officer on election advertising expenses. If election advertising expenses are \$5,000 or more, these reports must be audited.”

She went on to say, “[We are] committed to strengthening the province’s rules around election-related third-party advertising.” In the end, however, she forgot to write it into the legislation, or just chose to trivialize it. Either way, it’s offensive. In fact, under her rules, speaking out and voicing concerns during election time will continue to cost millions, ensuring that just those with the deepest pockets have their voice heard; in my estimation, Mr. Speaker, unduly influencing the outcome and usurping fairness and democracy, which we all stand for.

We made it clear to this government that we expected meaningful changes. They had at least two bills from our side of the House to utilize, and thus ensure that free speech remains free in Ontario. Just last month, on October 8, I argued for these changes during debate on my private member’s bill. My proposal was that we cap third-party advertising at \$150,000 per election cycle or \$3,000 per riding, to reflect the federal rules and caps in other provinces, and reflect what a political candidate is currently able to spend. That is fair. Considering this, I’ve got to tell you that there’s nothing more discouraging than seeing this government skirt on oversight and accountability, and again limit debate. It is just unprecedented how much they do this.

We’re debating this as part of a time allocation motion. It’s more appropriately called a gag motion, which is even more insulting. There’s a serious pattern being established here by the Wynne Liberal government, and it’s one that demonstrates disregard for democracy, disregard for Parliament, disregard for parliamentary process, and disregard and disrespect for the people we serve.

It’s exactly what the Liberal government is doing with the Hydro file. Ontarians don’t want it, Ontario businesses don’t want it, Ontario municipalities don’t want it, public institutions don’t want it, but Kathleen Wynne and her party want it; and they are going to steamroll and quickly sell off our biggest asset, Hydro One, in a fire sale. Just last week the Financial Accountability Officer’s report put a stop to their spin and proved what we have been saying all along on the Ontario Hydro One fire sale: It’s a bad deal for Ontarians, it will put each one of us in a worse financial situation, and the fact that the Liberal government is ignoring—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West, again on a point of order.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The same point of order as before, Speaker. I'm sure you'll understand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to tell me what your point of order is.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: To keep him on track on the amendment to the motion before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to bring his comments back to the amendment to the motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am trying my best to bring this back.

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When you time-allocate a bill as sensitive as something like this Electoral Boundaries Act, then I think you're stifling the reality of what we're here to do. We're here to serve the people of Ontario. We're here to ensure and respect and govern on the democratic principle our province and our country has been founded on. I'm trying to ensure that I am painting a picture for the people listening and who will read this to understand why we can't accept time allocation and why we need time, as the amendment suggests, to go across the province; to have proper time to consult and travel to various parts of our province so that people have their fair say to ensure that we're then able to hear them, to hear their voice and establish legislation and governance that is actually going to serve them in their best interests.

Mr. Speaker, just last week the Financial Accountability Officer suggested it's a bad deal. The fact that the Liberal government is ignoring the voice of the majority and steamrolling ahead in time allocation manner, taking debate off the table and trying to ram this through because it's their agenda, is just not acceptable. It proves this is anything but accountable and transparent government by this Liberal government. It begs the question, is the Liberal government governing for the benefit of the people of Ontario, or themselves? Will they do whatever it takes to remain in power, regardless of the cost or impact on the people we're elected to serve?

November 1 represented another unaffordable hydro increase for Ontarians as a result of the Liberal government's failed electricity policies. Do the members on that side of the House not care that average Ontario families will continue to struggle to pay their hydro bills? But back to Bill 115.

First they gutted the Auditor General's oversight of government advertising, shutting the door on accountability and transparency on a program that costs taxpayers millions and millions of dollars. Then they voted down our proposals, which were completely non-partisan, to cap third-party advertising and, again, reflect the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer for our province. I want to remind them that Bills 101 and 96 merely reflected what Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, identified as one of his top priorities: making elections fairer by capping third-party advertising. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that regulates third parties but doesn't restrain their spending on political ads during elections. In fact, it's so out of

control here that third-party groups are outspending political parties.

How do you defend against politically motivated payouts to teachers' unions and the ensuing work-to-rule strike, the longest in the province's history? Here is how a grade 8 student and school president at Egremont public school sees it:

"We love our school and appreciate our teachers, but we hate work-to-rule."

"I believe it's time to let the students voice their dislike of the atmosphere that has been created by teachers and support staff while making their point with the work-to-rule action."

"For this reason I am organizing a student work-to-rule. I will be sending out a letter to students Monday encouraging them to participate in our action as well as handing out ribbons representing what we are standing for."

"Student work-to-rule will look like this ... no homework, no bus monitoring (after the bell rings at the end of the day), no lunch monitoring, no bringing home instruments to practice ... we as students will do our work within our job description as students and only within our designated working hours. Our lunches will be our own and when the bell rings to go home"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I realize that the member is concerned about a number of issues with respect to his riding, and I certainly understand that. But I am compelled to ask him to bring these comments back to the motion before the House.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, the amendment is meant to allow us as representatives—the government—to go out to the public and hear their say fairly, to ensure that we understand the issues in all the corners of our great province and to ensure that we then bring that information back and debate it, and ensure that this legislation is in the best interests of Ontarians. The current governing party, the Liberals, by time-allocating motions, are trying to usurp that process. They're trying to take advantage. They're trying to steamroll their agenda that hasn't necessarily been given to them by the electorate.

At the end of the day, I want to see that this bill goes through. I want to ensure that the electoral boundaries are certainly representative and fair and democratic. At this point I'll end, so that my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London can have his say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I will start by saying that the amendment to the motion which was brought by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex makes sense. He says there are two and half years left before we will need this piece of legislation. All we have to do is travel this bill. This is a very small ask. It is a bill that I think everybody should have an opportunity to be heard on.

I will speak on behalf of people in my riding, but I would much rather that people from here get an oppor-

tunity to listen to them directly. For the people of Nickel Belt to come down to Toronto—I'm sorry, Speaker—is tough. It is expensive; it takes a lot of time. So rather than getting everybody interested in participating in the democratic process, they feel shut out, they feel disrespected and they feel as if what they have to say doesn't matter; nobody wants to hear them because nobody is coming. The amendment corrects that. The amendment says, "Let's go around the province and see if people have something to say about this bill." There is no rush whatsoever as to getting it through; we have two and a half years. I'm not saying that we take two and a half years, but how about we take two and a half months and travel around? The outcome is going to be a more robust democracy, an opportunity for people to be heard. That doesn't mean they're going to get what they wish for, but at least it means that we give them an opportunity to be heard.

One of the people who wants to be heard is the chief of the Wahnapitae First Nation, which I would love to say is in my riding, but it is not in my riding, because, for reasons unknown, they decided to put it in the Timiskaming—Cochrane riding. It makes no sense. Wahnapitae First Nation is on the shore of Lake Wanapitei, which is within the city of Greater Sudbury's boundaries. Wahnapitae First Nation is just a teeny-weeny, little First Nation. It's just one mile square. This is where Wahnapitae First Nation is. Mind you, they have huge ancestral territories all the way around, but their First Nation itself is one mile square. They border Lake Wanapitei.

If you've ever been to Lake Wanapitei, it's just a beautiful, beautiful lake. Some of the southwest shore of the lake has natural beaches. Every year, new sands get pushed by the ice and by the flow of the water. We also have the sandbanks on the north shore of Lake Wanapitei, very close to Wahnapitae First Nation. There is the North River that is full of fish. It is a very nice area.

The people who live on Lake Wanapitei are all part of my riding. They are part of the riding of Nickel Belt. I support them, and they support me, and we work together. When it comes to the Wahnapitae First Nation, this one kilometre square, for reasons unknown, somebody decided that those people were going to be part of part of Timiskaming—Cochrane. To put that in perspective, Speaker, there's about 20 kilometres max between Wahnapitae First Nation and my constituency office, and they go to Capreol, which is also in my riding, for their mail, for their groceries, for everything they need. They are part of the community of Capreol. But for voting purposes, at the federal level, they are part of Nickel Belt and they vote with Nickel Belt. At the provincial level, they are part of Timiskaming—Cochrane. On a good day, when the traffic is not too bad, when the construction is not too bad, when the weather is not too bad and the plowing has done what it is supposed to do, it will take you at least six or six and a half hours to go there and back. They could come to my constituency office in 15 minutes, or they could go to John's con-

stituency office, there and back, in six hours. That makes no sense. It has to be changed.

In the bill we have in front of us, they're not changing the boundaries for the northern ridings; they're only changing the boundaries for the southern ridings. I know that some changes were done in 2005, but, again, the situation has been going on for some time. The situation has been like this since 1996, Speaker. It will be 20 years pretty soon. There have been bills that have come through this House, and there have been changes to riding boundaries during that period of time, but Wahnapitae was always forgotten.

Wahnapitae First Nation, not that long ago—maybe 30 years ago—consisted of two people: Mr. and Madame Recollet, who stayed there. But now they have grown. They are a really, really nice, strong community. They have beautiful homes on the side of the lake. There are more and more people whose ancestry is with the Wahnapitae First Nation who want to move back onto the First Nation. They have a top-notch environmental consultant. Most of the descendants of the Recollets have university degrees, a lot of them in the environment.

Anyways, it's a thriving First Nations community. There are more and more people living there, and still nobody wants to hear what they have to say. Nobody wants to listen to what I can only consider an error that was made, because somebody wrote someplace that the riding of Nickel Belt will end at that particular junction on the northern boundary of the city of Greater Sudbury. But the boundaries of the city, of course, do not include the First Nation. The First Nation stands on its own, so you have this boundary with that little one-kilometre square taken out, and somebody who has never set foot in northern Ontario decided that this little square was going to be part of Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sounds like the process for Treaty 9.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. And for the last 20 years, this is what we have had to live with.

I want to leave some time on the clock for my colleague—

Interjection: From Timiskaming—Cochrane.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —from Timiskaming—Cochrane, yes.

I want you to understand, Speaker, that there is value in travelling. There is value in hearing people out, because those little anomalies where it only affects a few people, those people still have a right to be heard, they still have a voice. But when you make it so, so difficult for them to be heard, they just give up, and this is bad for democracy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Some conversation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, some conversation, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay is saying.

Give them an opportunity to be heard. That's all we want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I would have appreciated hearing some interaction from the government on this amend-

ment—I think it's valid—brought forth from our side of the party here.

I was prepared to speak on the time allocation motion, which, unfortunately, is a number in a series of motions that this government has put forward. We've done time allocation motions on Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act; Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act; Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act—which, by the way, took over two years to pass; Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act; and Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

Essentially, when the government does these time allocation motions, it shuts down debate in the House, when there are numerous members in the opposition who are representing their electorate, who are elected to bring their thoughts and views to this party, no matter—I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines brought forth that we all agree with this, so we should just move on. I think having these open debates actually brings up some ideas that maybe this government didn't hear, because basically, they just took the federal government's bill, copied and pasted it, rejigged the north and brought it forth as a bill. I've mentioned, in my debate on the bill previously, that they could have done some meaningful electoral reform at the time, either recall legislation or third-party advertising, which we think is in desperate need on this side of the House.

However, the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex brought forward an amendment to this motion. He brought forth this amendment because we know the government is going to use their majority and vote through this time allocation motion. Since they don't really want to have an open debate and talk with us, the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex brought forward an amendment saying that maybe we can compromise, that you're going to put through this time allocation motion but maybe we can take the committee out and tour Ontario and hear what people have to say from around the province. He has put out that he wants to have the committee go to Ottawa and Thunder Bay to help cover the north. I'm assuming Toronto is being used to cover the south; however, I know quite a few people in the London area who probably do not want to drive all the way through Toronto traffic to come downtown, if they find a parking spot and if they're able to get a time to actually speak in committee, because that time is going to be shortened. Not everybody from the public who wants to speak on this bill can speak. So, apparently, the Toronto area still isn't going to be covering southwestern Ontario. I'm sure that's part of the compromise as well.

We will be covering the Ottawa area, and Thunder Bay, I guess, is going to cover the entirety of northern Ontario. As the member from Timmins—James Bay has noted, that's not really covering the entire area as it should be.

If the government is going to use its majority and time-allocate everything that it wants to get through, even though, as the member from Nickel Belt did say, we still

have two years and six months until the next election—we have plenty of time to make the changes to the electoral boundaries; there's not a rush. We would have time to tour. I would think the government would at least listen to our amendment on our side of the House and let us have committee travel to Ottawa and Thunder Bay to hear the considerations of those that are being affected throughout this province.

As I said, my area of Elgin—Middlesex—London is being affected slightly. I'm losing a little bit of south London. I'm still retaining the Lambeth area and the newer development heading into southern London, which I'm quite proud to continue to represent, but my area of the White Oaks Mall area will be going to the member from London—Fanshawe. She will be getting those constituents into her riding. Maybe those people wanted to have a discussion about what that change means to them. Maybe they're happy with being included with the Lambeth area and the area between St. Thomas and London, the Glanworth area, definitely.

As I said, I'm speaking quickly on this amendment, and I hope the government listens. It's a compromise. It's kind of our olive branch out there. We realize you're going to use your majority and time-allocate basically every legislation because you don't believe in true debate in this House. At least they can listen to us and let committee go out and hear the people of Ontario before we go further.

I'm just quickly wrapping up for the party. I appreciate that we were actually given this time to debate. As I said, I was going to focus on the time allocation motion but I thought that with this amendment coming forward, we have an opportunity. There are a few cabinet ministers here who can talk about this at the cabinet meeting or a pre-meeting they may have. I know the backbenchers are silenced; they don't have a voice in this government. The backbenchers sit there quietly and don't say anything. However, I hope the government listens to what we have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak on behalf of the people who live in the riding of Timiskaming—Cochrane, which right now includes the residents of the Wahnapitae First Nation. I'd like to follow my colleague from Nickel Belt. The Wahnapitae First Nation is in a unique position: It's a beautiful, beautiful spot, but, quite frankly, it shouldn't be in my riding because it's almost impossible for those people to be serviced from my riding. I can distinctly remember the first time I visited the Wahnapitae First Nation and was shocked at how far I had to drive around in another riding to actually get there.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Two ridings: You have to go through Nickel Belt and Sudbury—

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, you have to go through two ridings. Worse: The people who live in the Wahnapitae First Nation have to drive through two ridings to get to my closest constituency office. That doesn't make sense.

So the member from Nickel Belt and myself and Chief Ted Roque, the Chief of the Wahnapitae First Nation, who has lobbied long and hard for this change—the first time I talked to Chief Roque, that was the first thing on his agenda, because he felt that his people would be better serviced if they were actually serviced by the geographical riding they were in.

That's the most important thing I would like to get across today: We need an amendment. This will be our last chance to say this before the hearings, which are going to be very short. Even with the amendment proposed by the Tories—if it passes—they're still going to be very short. This is a case, in the Wahnapitae First Nation, where the residents agree and both MPPs agree. Actually, the riding boundary change would simply, in this case, match the federal riding boundary. That's an issue I hope the government is listening to, that we are really trying to actually make government responsive to the Wahnapitae First Nation. It's not an earth-shattering issue for most of the province, but for the Wahnapitae First Nation it would make a big difference.

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Regarding time allocation, the way it's supposed to work for those people—the way I used to understand government is, people who were elected would have the ability to speak for a certain time, and when no further members of the House wanted to speak, the debate would die a natural death, as happened on Thursday afternoon with Bill 85. Everyone had spoken, the bill collapsed, and we voted on it this morning—a fairly innocuous procedure. What was funny was, after Bill 85 collapsed—I'm the whip for the party—I was in the whip's office, and the first thing we got was a notice of time allocation for this bill. So although the process can work, this government chooses not to follow the process, which is really odd, specifically with a bill where you're talking about electoral boundaries across the province.

This time allocation motion, coupled with the Conservative amendment, gives a couple of more meeting dates. But let's look at what the government proposed: one afternoon in Toronto to discuss all the riding boundaries and all the electoral concerns from people across the province. Really? I think Chief Ted Roque is committed enough that we could try to get him on that agenda, but for a lot of people it's impractical—no, the word is “impossible”—to actually participate in this process. It doesn't have to be done tomorrow. It's not like a health issue. No one is going to die if we don't get this law in before December. We're talking about our democratic process, which is something very important, and we're talking about issues that are going across the province.

An issue that I think this government should take heed of—although I've heard the Premier say several times that we are one Ontario, we are not: There is a huge divide between rural and northern Ontario and urban Ontario, specifically the GTA. Instead of taking our differences and making us stronger—because there's nothing wrong with having differences. That's what could make our culture, our province, very strong. We

have to acknowledge those differences. An example of how a government talks about, “We are one Ontario,” but actually in its actions takes a totally different take—because we're talking about changing the electoral process across the province, yet one afternoon in Toronto, folks, should be enough for everyone in rural Ontario to express their concerns, which is what is obviously a rural-urban divide.

People in rural Ontario and northern Ontario are concerned. They don't begrudge having more seats in the urban part of the province because there are more people. The urban part is growing. No one in rural Ontario begrudges that, but rural Ontario wants to know that they will be represented in this new system where their proportion is less. We in rural and northern Ontario are really nervous about that because, specifically, of an example like this: “We're going to change the boundaries. We'll keep the same seats in northern Ontario, and everything's going to be fine, but we're going to have one afternoon of meetings in Toronto,” the centre of the universe for Ontario.

Why do you think people in rural Ontario are nervous? If they had seen, “We're going to hold hearings where there's enough interest,” as my colleague from Timmins–James Bay suggested, and if they advertised, “The committee is about to sit on this bill, and if a lot of people express interest from Wahnapitae or from Peawanuck or from”—and they would work something out so that these people could actually express their concerns, and perhaps the government could make better legislation because they had input from the public. But that's not what this government has chosen to do. It has chosen to fast-track legislation which doesn't need to be fast-tracked. It's chosen to time-allocate, to stop people from talking about legislation that isn't time sensitive but that is regionally sensitive. It's very sensitive, and the government has chosen—it isn't by happenstance, this isn't by accident—to ignore northern Ontario. It has chosen to ignore rural Ontario. There is a huge rural-urban divide. It's created by this government and perpetuated by this government, and it needs to stop. That is why this time allocation motion is absolutely disastrous for the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Earlier this afternoon, Mr. Gravelle moved government notice of motion number 43. Mr. McNaughton then moved that the motion be amended as follows:

“That the motion be amended by striking out everything following the second paragraph up to and including ‘Monday, November 30’”—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Dispense? Dispense.

We are now dealing with Mr. McNaughton's amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays would have it.
 Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral of the vote on this amendment by the chief government whip of the official opposition. We will have this vote deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, after question period.

Vote deferred.

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW
 AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
 RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 122.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I very much look forward to speaking to this bill. I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport, the member for York South-Weston and the President of the Treasury Board.

When I think about my responsibility as a member and our responsibility as a government, I often think about how we help those who are less fortunate in our communities and in our society in Ontario. I also think a lot about how we support those who need our help the most. I think one of the groups of folks who do need our help, and who I think the government has done a lot of work with to help, is those folks who are struggling with mental health challenges. So one of the things that I am pleased to do today is to speak to this bill.

When I think about those who are caring for people with special needs and with mental health challenges, I often think of the people who serve my community in Etobicoke Centre. Specifically, I think about those at the Etobicoke Children's Centre and the Silver Creek pre-school, who care for children with special needs. I just want to take this opportunity to thank them for their relentless work and their commitment to our community.

In fact, I was at a fundraiser last week for the Etobicoke Children's Centre and had the privilege of joining many members of the community, of all ages and all backgrounds, in their work and their fundraising efforts to support the Etobicoke Children's Centre, an organization that our government supports, along with the Silver Creek pre-school, both of which are making a fantastic difference in our community.

1530

Today, in speaking to this bill, this is really about making sure that we continue to provide support for those with mental health challenges, but also that we do

something else that's very important for all members and for our government, which is to make sure we're defending and upholding the rights of Ontarians. Some of the most fundamental rights are enshrined in our charter of rights, and that's what this bill is all about. In this bill, the government is taking action to comply with the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, which declared that part of the Mental Health Act is in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave the government until December 23 of this year to make amendments to the Mental Health Act that comply with the court's decision. Specifically, Speaker, the court struck down the provision of the act that allows a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. This was because the Mental Health Act did not provide for a regular review of the conditions of the patient's continued detention to ensure it would be the least restrictive within the circumstances that required that detention.

Bill 122 is designed to address the concerns that the court expressed. The amendments would enhance the ability of the Consent and Capacity Board to make certain orders in relation to patients who have been in a psychiatric facility as involuntary patients for longer than six months. A factor that the board would have to take into account would be, of course, that any limitation on a patient's liberty be the least restrictive commensurate with the circumstances requiring the patient's involuntary detention. The board would make a decision based on the evidence before it. Basically, what I'm saying here is that this bill would allow us to make sure, and allow the board to make sure, that they would find the appropriate level of care for those folks who are facing these circumstances.

The amendments would make it possible to detain a patient on a new form, a certificate of continuation, after the expiry of the patient's third certificate of renewal; that is, after six months and two weeks. A certificate of continuation will allow a patient who has been detained in a psychiatric hospital longer than six months to be detained for an additional three-month period, similar to the current certificates under the Mental Health Act. Subsequent certificates of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for further three-month periods if the patient continued to meet the test for being involuntarily detained under the act. To ensure that long-term involuntary patients are not detained in a manner greater than is necessary to meet the important objectives of the Mental Health Act—that is, ensuring community safety and helping patients get the treatment they need—the Consent and Capacity Board would also be given the power to make a limited range of additional orders, in specific circumstances, when it reviews a long-term involuntary patient's certificate of continuation. These would be things such as transferring a patient to another psychiatric facility if the patient does not object; placing a patient on leave of absence on the advice of a physician; directing the officer in charge to provide different security levels or different privileges within or outside the psychiatric facility, etc.

Basically, Speaker, what we're doing here today is making sure that we continue to provide the appropriate level of care to people with these mental health conditions, but also making sure that we're abiding by the court's ruling and respecting our charter of rights, which is fundamental to why we're here in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak and to lend my support to Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

The protection and safety of all Ontarians is the number one priority of this government, and this is why the proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act, if passed, would help ensure that patients who are detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months have their liberty interests protected while at the same time ensuring that health care providers can continue to provide excellent care to these patients.

We are taking this action to comply with the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, which declared that part of the Mental Health Act is in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill 122 is intended to address the court's concerns. The amendments would enhance the ability of the Consent and Capacity Board to make certain orders in relation to patients who have been in a psychiatric facility as involuntary patients for longer than six months.

There is no question that mental health and addictions is a very significant and complex issue that cuts across multiple areas of society and touches the lives of many people. It is this government's belief that every Ontarian should enjoy good mental health and well-being throughout their lives, and that all Ontarians with mental health or addictions can recover and participate in welcoming, supportive communities.

You know, Mr. Speaker, before being elected to this House I worked for many years in the pharmaceutical industry. One of the therapeutic areas that I worked in was mental health. During the time that I worked in Europe, I had the privilege to work with many thought leaders in the area of psychiatry and mental health, and all of them agreed on the importance of the de-stigmatization of mental health issues and on the early diagnosis of mental health illness and challenges. We know that one in five Ontarians will experience a mental health illness in their lifetime. That's why our government created the comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy: to support Ontarians from childhood to old age with mental health and addiction issues, to provide the early detection of mental health issues and provide the appropriate course of action.

Since 2003, funding for mental health and addiction services has increased by over \$506 million, to a total of \$1 billion. Our government's plan is to increase funding by \$220 million over three years as we renew our commitment to our mental health and addictions strategy. In November of last year, our government announced

phase 2 of our expansion of Ontario's mental health and addictions strategy, which will address better access, quality and value by focusing on five strategic goals that will help our system. It is aligned with our government's Poverty Reduction Strategy. This phase, phase 2, will provide \$138 million over the next three years to community agencies. This is great news for organizations such as Madison Community Services in my riding of Davenport, which promotes the independence, health, recovery and community integration of people with mental health or addiction challenges. Madison Community Services does this great work through advocacy, education, and the provision of a broad range of community-based and housing support services.

Mr. Speaker, when I met with the many mental health and illness thought leaders while working in Europe, one of the important things they would often raise is the reintegration of these patients with mental health and addiction issues back into their communities and back to contributing to society. So I'm pleased that our government also sees this as an important issue and that it will be investing \$16 million over the next three years and work with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to create 1,000 new supportive housing units. Our plan will improve access to services, reduce wait times, and fill the gaps in our system.

So many Ontarians have been touched by mental health and addiction challenges in some way. Having worked in this therapeutic area for a number of years and having worked with top psychiatrists all across Europe, I am proud of the work our government is doing to improve the quality of life for people experiencing mental health and addictions, proud of the changes being made by this bill to ensure that our patients are getting the right care at the right time at the right place, and I'm proud to have stood up in this House today to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for York South-Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to add my voice to the debate on Bill 122. I think that this bill brings the proper balance between patients' rights and the public interest, trying to ensure access to treatment when the patients need it. The measures would be commensurate to the situation that these patients are in, giving at the same time more tools to the Consent and Capacity Board.

As you have heard already, Mr. Speaker, we are taking action to comply with the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, which declared that part of the Mental Health Act is in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave us until December 23 of this year to make amendments to the Mental Health Act that complied with the court's decision. More specifically, the court struck down the provision of the act that allows a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. This was because the Mental Health Act did not provide for a regular review of the conditions of a patient's detention to ensure that it

would be the least restrictive within the circumstances that required this detention. The amendments would make it possible to detain a patient under a new form called a certificate of continuation after the expiry of the patient's third certificate of renewal; that is, after six months and two weeks. A certificate of continuation would allow a patient who has been detained in a psychiatric hospital for longer than six months to be detained for an additional three-month period, similar to the current certificates under the Mental Health Act.

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To ensure that long-term involuntary patients are not detained in a manner that is greater than necessary—because this is really the intent—to meet the important objectives of the Mental Health Act, the Consent and Capacity Board would be given the power to make a limited range of additional orders, in specific circumstances, when it reviews a long-term involuntary patient's certificate of continuation. These orders would be, for example:

- transferring a patient to another psychiatric facility if the patient does not object;
- placing a patient on a leave of absence on the advice of a physician;
- directing the officer in charge to provide different security levels or different privileges within or outside the psychiatric facility;
- directing the officer in charge to provide supervised or unsupervised access to the community; and
- directing the officer in charge to provide vocational, interpretation and/or rehabilitative services.

Similar to the current regime in the Mental Health Act, the long-term involuntary patient would be entitled to request a review of his or her involuntary status after each certificate of continuation is issued. There would be a mandatory review of the patient's involuntary status when the first certificate of continuation is issued at six months and two weeks, and every year thereafter. The long-term involuntary patient would also be able to apply for an additional order at any time they seek a review of the renewal of their certification, where they have not applied in the last 12 months or where the Consent and Capacity Board is satisfied that there has been a material change in circumstances.

As we've heard, so many Ontarians have been touched by mental health and addictions in some way. As a government, we are committed to supporting the most appropriate care for people who are experiencing mental health and addiction challenges, and we need to comply with the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal within a limited time.

So I would urge all members to support the proposed amendments because they aim at improving the lives of the most vulnerable Ontarians, the ones who need our help the most. This would allow them to have more flexibility. It would really balance, as I said at the beginning, the patient's rights with the public interest, so I hope that everyone in this House will be supporting these amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm happy to add comments to the government's debate on Bill 122 with regard to changing the Mental Health Act. Our concern on this side of the House, as I mentioned earlier in my debate—and it's something that we need to discuss further when this bill reaches committee level—is the fact that they're making changes to the Consent and Capacity Board, the members who actually make up the committee. There have been concerns from a group of psychiatrists that I've been corresponding with. The fact is that the change to the Consent and Capacity Board has nothing to do with the court case and why changes had to be made to this bill. It's unfortunate that the government has snuck this change into this bill when there are other substantive issues with the Mental Health Act that probably could be addressed.

Perhaps it would have been the opportunity to bring that change which they want to bring forward in an all-encompassing change to this bill. It's been close to 15 years since the Mental Health Act has been modified or changed to fit the needs of Ontarians today. We would think that it would be positive if the government could bring forth a bill that does encompass the changes to the Mental Health Act to ensure that it's up to date. At that time, it would have been the appropriate time to bring the changes to the Consent and Capacity Board that they're proposing today.

I've also been in contact with a group of psychiatrists who said the hospital psychiatrists weren't even consulted on the changes to this legislation. It's unfortunate. The government had a year to make the necessary changes to this bill, and unfortunately, it's being rushed near the end. Maybe something held them up somewhere along the line; however, they had eight or nine months before they proposed this bill to actually sit down and consult with hospital psychiatrists who deal with the treatment of patients with mental illness day in and day out. Unfortunately, that didn't occur. Hopefully, during committee we'll have the time to meet with those people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mme France Gélinas: I have only two minutes to go through something that needs to change in the bill. Bill 122 basically copied and pasted more or less what's happening within the court system, in the forensic system, where people with mental health are dealt with within the court and then the courts will order treatments for them. They will follow through and they will get that treatment.

To do the copy and paste into the health care system looked like an easy way to comply with what the court had to say, but on the ground, this is not going to work, because on the ground there aren't the resources within the institutional mental health system, or any part of the mental health system for that matter, to be able to comply with what the courts impose. In this instance, it will be what the Consent and Capacity Board will impose.

We have such a unit in Sudbury. Some of the people who have been held there have been held there for 50

years. That's a long time. The people there are the best psychiatric nurses I have ever met. They deal with people who are very sick; they are severely mentally sick. On a good day, they are just really sick; the rest of the time, they are really, really sick. They need the support of those highly skilled nurses to be able to cope with their disease. That the Consent and Capacity Board would be able to say to somebody who is not able to go outside unsupervised without two nurses, "From now on you will be allowed"—it's to ask the health care system to do something that there aren't the resources to do. The people there do the best they can with the resources we give them. Without a huge influx of money, this will look good on paper and will fail our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member from Davenport and the member from York South-Weston. Getting back to Bill 122, it is a bill that is specific to a court's ruling which is coming due this December. I concur with my colleagues across the way that there is a lot more work we can do in mental health. There always will be. We are working with limited resources.

But what we need to remember is that what this bill does is create fairness and some transparency for those people who are involuntarily committed, to ensure that their rights and that the conditions of their involuntary commitment are commensurate with their current circumstances.

We know that things have changed over 20 years or 23 years since the Mental Health Act has been opened. There are differences in treatment, differences in identifying different mental illnesses. Those things have changed, so it's important that we address this very specific circumstance that exists inside the Mental Health Act. I think that the minister has done a good job in addressing that.

Let's not make this bigger than it actually is. This is about fairness and transparency and ensuring that people who are involuntarily committed have access to fairness and justice and transparency.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise in debate on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act. As my colleague from Ottawa South previously noted, this bill is to bring our Legislature and our province into accordance and compliance with the Ontario Court of Appeal.

I'm specifically in support of this legislation because it is rights-based. I think it's important that we provide counselling and advice to those patients across this province on their rights, particularly as they pertain to mental health and addictions.

I must say that I have been fortunate over the past decade, for the last nine years, to have sat with a woman who has been one of the biggest advocates and cham-

pions of mental health and addictions awareness in this province, and that's Christine Elliott, the former member from Whitby-Oshawa. Christine, from the moment she arrived here in this assembly, took up the fight for those who not only were disadvantaged but who were vulnerable, and she wanted to be their voice. I was proud to walk into this Legislature with her in April 2006 and to be her seatmate for almost four terms in the Legislature.

For me, I see this piece of legislation as carrying on a lot of the work that she has advocated for, not only in the assembly as a private member, but as our health critic previously for two mandates and, in addition, as someone who fought for and was very successful in getting a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in this province.

I appreciate the assembly indulging for me for the past two minutes to talk about Ms. Elliott and her contributions to this Legislature. If there were more Christine Elliotts in this assembly, I dare say, we'd be a great province—which we already are—but we'd be even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members can now respond. I see the member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to start off by thanking the MPPs for Etobicoke Centre, York South-Weston, Elgin-Middlesex-London, Nickel Belt, Ottawa South and Nepean-Carleton for speaking this afternoon so passionately about this bill and so passionately about mental health.

I think it's important that we talk about mental health the way we did here this afternoon, to recognize that it is important that we treat those with mental health and addiction challenges. That's why the proposed amendments that we are making to the Mental Health Act—which, if passed, would help ensure that patients who are detained in a psychiatric facility longer than six months have their liberty interests protected while at the same time ensuring that the health care providers can continue to provide excellent health care to these patients. We heard about the importance of providing the patients with the right care at the right time in the right place. This bill speaks to that.

There is no question, as we heard here this afternoon, that mental health and addictions is a very significant and complex issue that cuts across multiple areas of society and touches the lives of many people.

It is this government's belief that every Ontarian should enjoy good mental health and well-being throughout their lives and that all Ontarians with mental health or addictions can recover and participate in welcoming, supportive communities. The government's mental health and addictions strategy is our plan to support mental health and addictions throughout life.

I'd like to thank, once again, everyone who had the opportunity to speak on this bill this afternoon, and look forward to having their support as we move forward with third reading on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 122. As we know, it proposes amendments to the Mental Health Act and to the Health Care Consent Act, and is required by a judge's decision last December. But the court-ordered deadline is this December—that's next month, Speaker—and I think we're a little late in the game. I see this timeline as a bit of a problem, in my view; so much for any semblance of any citizen participation or consultation. I just heard about this a few weeks ago. In fact, this Legislature wasn't informed about this until September 23 of this fall, and here we have a deadline of December 23.

I also get the impression that this legislation has been dropped on us as a fait accompli. The judge has decided, obviously, a year ago; the government has decided—no one in this chamber is a psychiatrist. The Minister of Health is not a psychiatrist. I haven't received any phone calls about this or emails alerting me to this required change, certainly not from the general public and not from the media. I assume this government sent out news releases about this legislation. I really can't find anything in the media about this. Maybe they didn't send out news releases.

As far as my riding—it's 100,000 or 110,000 people—we do not have a resident psychiatrist. We may have a private practice; I'm not sure. It's certainly not for a lack of trying over the last 30 years. I also worked in this field for a number of years before being elected.

We know the trend that really goes back to the 1950s in the United States: the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric facilities in favour of a community-based approach. But we still have 80 psychiatric facilities in the province of Ontario. Again, I question the deinstitutionalization.

When government is not on top of these issues, when we find out just a few weeks ago something they knew last December with this court order, it's obviously been a low priority for most of the past year. I know that there has been other pressing business in this Legislature. We spent I'm not sure how many hours debating save the whales. That was important for some people. I feel this is very important.

If government is not going to communicate with the public about an issue as important as this with respect to people who are involuntarily detained in a psychiatric institution—with not a lot of avenues to communicate, if it's possible for them to physically communicate alone—it just begs the question: Where does this government lie as far as this priority? When government does not communicate, other entities fill the void.

This is an issue of psychiatric detention and human rights. As elected representatives, we have to be cognizant of where the general public is on this. We should be, at any rate. What are public attitudes or public knowledge of this issue, or a lack thereof? This has been the case for many years, probably as far back as we have had psychiatric institutions, or asylums as they were known, certainly going back to these late 1830s in the United States.

Many will know that this Ontario Legislature, this building, was built on the site of what was probably

referred to at the time as an insane asylum. Sometimes, given the antics in this House, the opinion has been ventured more than once that this is quite an appropriate location for us to carry on our business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm not sure that's a parliamentary remark. I'll let it go in this circumstance. I'll let it go.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Call me crazy, but this was built on the site of an insane asylum. That's not a politically correct term these days.

Anyway, our job is to represent the public; our job is to represent public opinion. Where do people get their information on this? I don't think there have been any news releases. Some people watch this channel as we scramble to put words together and speak.

Two authors come to mind who have had a big influence on public opinion. The first author was Nellie Bly, going back to when this structure was built in the late 1800s. The other person, an author, is Ken Kesey. Given their influence on public opinion on government policy with respect to human rights and psychiatric institutionalization, I feel it's incumbent on government to also communicate.

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Nellie Bly wrote a piece that became a book. She wrote it in 1887, and it was titled *Ten Days in a Mad-House*. It chronicled her undercover journey through Blackwell's Island in New York City. What she did, as a journalist, was feign insanity, and she was committed, and found out that sometimes it's harder to get out than it is to get in. That's what we're talking about today, 100 years later. That had a big influence at the time. She discovered, when she was institutionalized, that the more sane she spoke, the more insane she was thought to be.

Nellie Bly will become, in the public's consciousness, ever-increasingly, in coming days—a film has been made about her work back in 1887. The film's coming out November 11. It's a film set in—let me think. Well, Blackwell's Island is in New York City. It will give us, certainly, a window on what occurred then and what has changed since then. Obviously, in the last 100 years, this Legislature hasn't brought in these kinds of amendments. I just wonder what's been going on in the last 100 years.

Ken Kesey: I think some will recognize that name. He wrote a book in 1962; the title was *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. This was made into a film in 1975. I feel that people don't know what goes on in our psychiatric institutions. My worry is that they may think that they know. Many of us, of a certain age, will certainly remember that Jack Nicholson film that was made from the Ken Kesey book. People will have another image of our psychiatric institutions once they see the film that's going to come out in 10 days, the story of Nellie Bly.

So here we are debating Ontario's Mental Health Act. We know that a person can be detained involuntarily in a psychiatric facility—as was the case back in the 1830s—in this case, for an initial two-week period, an additional month on first renewal of the involuntary admission and an additional two months on a second renewal and an

additional three months, and it goes on. Nellie Bly was only incarcerated for 10 days. She was able to get out again in 10 days, thanks to a lawyer.

Under the current Mental Health Act, unamended, a patient is entitled to a review of their involuntary status after the certificate of admission, the first one, and after each certificate of renewal is issued. After an involuntary patient has been in the hospital for more than six and a half months, and every year thereafter, there is a mandatory review of the involuntary status of the particular patient. This is held before what's referred to as the CCB, the Consent and Capacity Board. There are some amendments being made to this board, and I don't know whether—the judge didn't call for that. I don't know whether that's necessary or not, but we do know the purpose of the bill is to come into compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision.

Currently, the Mental Health Act allows for repeated renewals of a patient's involuntary status. There appears to be no mechanism for civilly detained patients. These aren't ones like Jack Nicholson in the film, who was transferred from a correctional facility. In fact, he volunteered—he was up on gambling charges and, I'm not sure, assault—to go to the mental institution rather than a correctional institution. In the end, it cost him his life, if you remember the end of the film. But there's no mechanism here for civilly detained patients to challenge the conditions of their treatment.

In order to provide a bit of background, involuntary patients are detained in psychiatric facilities because they have a mental illness or there's a risk of harming themselves or harming other people; there are other criteria for involuntary committal. The long-term patients are those who have been detained for more than six months. The majority of the people who are detained longer than six months, by and large, suffer a number of ailments: mood disorders, depression, bipolar, manic depression, or psychotic disorders like schizophrenia or psychogeriatric disorders, and it comprises something like 330 long-term and voluntary psychiatric patients. That's held over our heads if we don't pass this. There's the spectre of 330 patients arriving on the street, and many would be suicidal. That puts pressure on us. I think that puts pressure on this government. Perhaps it puts pressure on that judge who set a one-year deadline, knowing this government doesn't do anything in a hurry.

According to today's Mental Health Act, a physician may examine a person and determine whether or not they meet the criteria for an application for an assessment. An assessment is effective for seven days. This is the form 1 we've heard about during debate. That's the form that gives any person the authority to take a person to a psychiatric facility. Again, the person, as attending physician at the facility—it can't be the same doctor, of course, who issued the form 1. They must examine a person within 72 hours, and then they can release them or admit them, either as voluntary or involuntary.

Going back to that film with Jack Nicholson, I assume the main characters were all there involuntarily. Half of

those characters were there voluntarily. They just became subject to the psychological influence of the head nurse and of the institution itself.

We've got a bill that's here to comply with a court order that indicated there was a breach of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It's regrettable that the Court of Appeal ruled in December of last year that the deadline is December 23. We really don't have much time on this one, Speaker. The court struck down the provision that a person is detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. This was because the Mental Health Act did not provide for a regular review of the conditions of the patient's continued detention. Again, this was mentioned: The purpose of this legislation is to ensure that it would be the least restrictive within the circumstances that required the detention in the first place.

So since December of last year, this government knew we had to do something. They knew we had to bring changes to this act because the court ordered them to do so. We've really just begun debate on this piece of legislation.

There are other amendments people have asked for with this legislation. Think of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. That was five years ago, something like August 2010. They asked for something like this, as I recall, five years ago. Here we are, we've got to go through second reading—this is Inside Baseball—committee, third reading and royal assent. All have to be done by December 22, because on December 23, we are told, the door swings open and 330 or so severely mentally ill people get out.

The Legislature sits another four weeks. We don't sit next week. That's remembrance week. The calendar indicates that we rise on December 10. I see this as a really bad example—this is very poor planning.

I think of the field in front of my house. We combine soybeans at the end of September, and within days—and this is called planning—we put in winter wheat, because you grow winter wheat, and it continues to grow through most of the winter.

You have to plan ahead. In farming, industry, business and everyday life, you plan ahead. When you were told by a judge to bring in this legislation last December and you didn't let anybody know about it until September of this year, I consider that poor planning. We're not just dealing with grains of wheat or with soybeans; we're dealing with people detained in psychiatric institutions involuntarily, people who have trouble speaking for themselves.

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The Select Committee on Mental Health: We should have been working on that for the past five years. I think that's really quite regrettable. I just regret the fact that many of us didn't know about this sooner to maybe push the envelope a bit. I don't want to go through a lot of what has been said already in debate. Much of the debate seems to be essentially reading out parts of the legislation.

When people are released—I think of, in my community, many people that I speak with who have

schizophrenia. This is a good thing: They come in under the umbrella of our local Canadian Mental Health Association. Many of these people can't live on their own. We also have outpatient counselling, which was referred to adult mental health services. My wife was a psychiatric social worker for a number of years with that agency. It is now merged with addiction services. Unfortunately they're probably going to go out on strike. They're looking for a 5% raise over the next two years.

This kind of legislation does have an impact on all of us. It's not something people phone us about, as I indicated. But we do have the Mental Health Act. It's based on consent and substitute decision-making. The ticket in is a form 1. I am heartened, from a human rights perspective, that we have legislation that will provide people with more options for that ticket out, if it is justified.

People have the right to retain a lawyer, to instruct a lawyer, and they have access to a telephone. People have access to a rights adviser to, again, let them know about any change in their legal status. They do have the right to challenge the doctors' decision. As I say, access to a lawyer and legal aid—but as an involuntary patient, that means you're not free to leave the hospital without permission. The Mental Health Act lays that out, the two reasons: where the person is a danger to themselves and other persons, or may unintentionally injure themselves; and secondly, where the person's condition is deteriorating and they do require hospitalization.

It's very difficult to explain this to the general public. They get to watch films like *Cuckoo's Nest*. They'll have an opportunity in 10 days to watch a new film, *10 Days in a Madhouse*. I just like to wrap up, and I quote from a children's poem:

One flew east, one flew west,
One flew over the cuckoo's nest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. Thanks to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for some of his insights into this bill.

The member from Nickel Belt, just before she spoke on the last round of two minutes, talked about how she didn't think the government was actually going to be able to accomplish what they need to do with this bill. Although it's a good thing to give more authority to the Consent and Capacity Board, the Liberal government is not giving them the funding to go along with that. They're expanding their scope to add four or five more things that I'll talk about more when I actually have my 20 minutes, but at the end of the day, when the courts order something, the funding goes with it. With the Consent and Capacity Board, even though they're giving them more authority, even to order treatment for people who are incarcerated, they're not giving them the funding to go along with it.

In 2013–14, they were allocated \$4.8 million, but they actually spent \$6.4 million—a significant amount more—

and the actuals showed \$6.2 million. This year, in 2015–16, the government is once again allocating just the same amount of money. So even though the government is expanding the mandate for this board and its authority, how does the government actually expect the CCB to carry out this expanded authority if they're not going to give them any funds to go along with it? So that, just to start, is problematic.

With respect to this recommendation and only having nine months, well, in fact, one of the recommendations that came out of the select committee five years ago was to make sure that there were these treatments available to patients who were incarcerated in the psychiatric system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I, too, listened carefully to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, and I was particularly impressed with his sense of a historical overview. The movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* changed a lot of attitudes about mental health. We can thank Hollywood for not too many things, but that's one I think we can thank them for. I was pleased to hear that reference.

Some of us who have been involved in mental health boards and mental health education committees locally for years have, I think it would be fair to say, always felt that governments of all levels have been moving far too slowly with respect to recognizing the stigma attached generically to mental health issues and, more pointedly, the folk who are nameless and faceless and in an involuntary kind of setting. Government has a responsibility to move to protect people from themselves, and if they're a risk to others.

I have a nephew—I should say had a nephew—who was schizophrenic. He didn't get the services he wanted and committed suicide out in BC. It was very tragic. A number of us came together from that experience and formed a group in Hamilton some 20 years ago, which is still functioning, called the Friends of Schizophrenics. So a big part of this is education.

Government moves slowly, too slowly at times, but at the same time, it moves slowly for a reason. Particularly on something as delicate as this, you want to get it right, because if you get it wrong, then you're creating more problems than you started out with. I offer that up for what it's worth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. He took us back on a little bit of a journey there. I certainly remember—I can hardly remember, but I did just see it was on again recently—*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It was just on maybe two weeks ago. I didn't bother watching it because I knew how it turned out. I couldn't remember all of the details.

I also liked his comments about what we've been faced with with the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients over the last number of years, and how it's made

such a difference in what our police have to respond to, and our hospitals and other institutions.

Nellie Bly: That's another interesting—I remember that from when I was very young. There was some song about Nellie Bly. I'm going to have to go look the words up when I'm done.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sing it, sing it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, we'll get Yak to sing it.

Anyway, this is an important subject. The disease burden—I'm just reading some stats on it—of mental illness and addiction is one and a half times higher than all the cancers put together, and more than seven times that of infectious diseases in Ontario alone. The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated to cost \$51 billion a year, so in all of Canada, a billion dollars a week. That's an amazing statistic, and it's amazing what that's costing our economy.

Our caucus recognizes the devastating effects of mental illness and the stigma that is attached to those thousands of Ontarians who are affected by that. Mental health is just as important as physical health, and we need to treat it that way.

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Just last week, the Health Quality Ontario annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addiction have not improved in the last five years, and suicide rates have not, in fact, improved in a decade. We need to do better, and we must do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the comments of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I think that he went to the heart of the matter. As you know, there is an immense amount of stigma attached to mental health. He did call upon the government to use this opportunity to open the Mental Health Act to actually act. It's a burning issue in all of our ridings, and I think that we, as MPPs, have a responsibility to bring those voices here to this place.

He touched on the issue of incarceration, and of course he used the movie One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest as a means to actually tell the story. I recall watching that movie, and it still has significant impact. I think that's the power of art and the power of movies. But what also became very clear in that story was the power imbalance between the patient and the institution.

I think that Bill 122 aims to try to address that power imbalance, because those who are actually on the other side of the door—usually a locked door, Mr. Speaker—usually have no power. They have no voice, they have no one to advocate for them and they are vulnerable. They are made vulnerable by their mental illness and by the sickness, whatever it may be, that affects them, but there are few people in society who actually have strong advocates.

We have an opportunity today to actually accelerate this discussion—I think this was the message of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk—because that is

needed in the province of Ontario. We have a lot of evidence to prove that there have been missed opportunities to address the issue of mental illness and mental well-being in the province of Ontario, and it's not enough just to stand up in the House and say we can do more. We actually can do more. We have the opportunity to do so. That's the privilege we hold as members of provincial Parliament.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round, and I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do thank members for their feedback. I used the examples of Nellie Bly and Ken Kesey. As was indicated, they had an impact on society at the time. Back in the late 1880s, when Nellie Bly's report came out and later became a book, it was a bit of a scandal and she was back in there within a few weeks with a panel. In the short run, it cleaned up the place. Some people disappeared, and the psychiatrist apologized for diagnosing her as delusional and a hopeless case. She was a good actor, obviously.

The New York City of the day allocated a tremendous amount of money to that institution as a result of—I guess it must have been—a real bombshell at the time. We'll get to see this story in 10 days—anybody who wants to buy a theatre ticket. You can see the trailer for the film on the Internet. It looks like it's exaggerated quite a bit—the cold showers and things like that—but that stuff used to go on in psychiatric institutions as well. I guess they had not invented lobotomy at that time.

The same with Ken Kesey and the film Cuckoo's Nest: I think many of us remember Nurse Ratched, "Big Nurse." She was "remorseless." She was described as "a social dominatrix, a steely ... controller of her environment." When you're in a situation like that, even the voluntary clients, or patients, didn't know how to break free until Jack Nicholson did his thing and somebody got fired and some of them were able to sign themselves out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's such a pleasure for me to actually be part of this debate today. For me, personally, this is probably one of the most important debates I've been part of in this House. It has been a long-standing issue, ever since I was first elected as a trustee in 2003. One of the first people who approached me was a mother of a young daughter who was struggling desperately with mental health issues. She was frustrated with the school system, Mr. Speaker.

Now remember, this is 12 or 13 years ago. The system was not responsive to those needs. There was a level of compassion and there was a level of empathy, but there certainly was never an understanding of the pain the entire family and, indeed, the community would experience when those issues were not addressed with some level of dignity and with some level of compassion. I followed that mother's journey through seven years before her daughter took her life. There were actually no

words to describe it, except that mother turned into one of the strongest advocates I've ever met, and that is how she dealt with her grief. Every time we have the opportunity in this House to address the issue of mental illness, I believe we have a moral responsibility to bring the truth to bear.

When I was president of the Ontario Public School Boards Association, I had the opportunity to chair the mental health coalition for the province. That brought teacher unions, public health, legal counsel and emergency personnel to the table to say, "How can we be part of the solution on mental health?" I think speaking truth gives youth great power. Youth were represented at that table through the Student Trustees' Association, and they gave us a lesson that we will never forget. They said, "You must listen to us. If you don't listen to us, you will lose us." They were speaking on behalf of every student across the province of Ontario, and it was very powerful to have them at that table.

The lesson that I learned was that it was such a unique perspective on mental health issues, and addiction was a huge component of that. To listen to the need to self-medicate with drugs was powerful, because it was that missing component, I think, back in 2008-09, where we didn't have a full understanding of why youth were self-medicating. We didn't have a full understanding of the issue of youth mental health issues. I think that this bill, by opening up the Mental Health Act—I think this is an opportunity we're missing.

I do acknowledge that we are here and we are debating this issue essentially because of a court order. In 2014, a ruling of the Court of Appeal found that some provisions relating to the long-term involuntary detention of mental health patients were inconsistent to the Charter, which related to involuntary patients being committed, with the result that committals of indefinite length are possible. While the Consent and Capacity Board is authorized to confirm or rescind the detention order and can transfer the patient to a different psychiatric facility, the Consent and Capacity Board does not currently have the authority to change the conditions of detention or the manner of treatment of long-term patients.

Why I pulled this out of the act is that we in this House are elected to represent the comprehensive needs of our entire communities, but we have, I think, a significant duty and responsibility to represent those who have no voice, who live on the margins, who have no advocates. In this instance, there are 338 individuals who have been caught in this legislative gap, if you will. We have a responsibility to make sure that they are going to be dealt with in a humane way, with integrity and with dignity, that also finds the balance in protecting the public good. There are obviously some who have some serious concerns about those individuals coming out of institutions, not having due process and due diligence not being followed through, if you will.

The fact that the courts have had to order this Legislature to deal with this, and that it has been on the order book now for now over a year, provides an opportunity

for us to speak openly, and I think honestly, about the issue of mental health in the province of Ontario.

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These are not new issues. They are not new to the more experienced—I mean, I've only been here for three years, but who's counting. This has been a long-standing issue. We now have a fuller understanding of the economic impact of not addressing the issue of mental health in our province. We have a broader and comprehensive understanding of not addressing mental health issues and the impact that they have on our health care system. And for the first time in a long time we have a very clear picture of the cost—the fiscal cost—of not addressing the issue on our justice system.

I was very proud of our local paper, the Waterloo Region Record, which recently did an exposé, if you will, because there are inconsistencies across the province in how each community addresses mental health issues. A lot of that has to do with resources and with local leadership, but the provincial framework that was put in place back in 2010—it was an initial investment of \$246 million. There was such hope when that money was released. It was a three-year pilot project rolled out to school boards so that mental health leads could take those school boards, pull them along—understanding, of course, that not every school board was in the same place. I think that the understanding at the time was that school boards in the north were dealing with very different issues, and we know that through the relocation of First Nation students from on-reserve to off-reserve to major municipal centres, that transition proved to be quite deadly. The transition teams around mental health and support were not there to help those students with the resiliency, and there was a cost. There was a human cost, and there was obviously an economic cost. I would argue, though, that the human cost is higher.

In the Waterloo region, though, this exposé—this just came out, actually, October 23. It says, "Mental Health Crisis in Waterloo Region: 'Let's Get At This As A Community.'" It's an acknowledgement that—and this has been a long time coming—one's mental health in that family affects this family and their mental health; it impacts the workplace; it impacts the community as a whole. And so to finally have a clear picture, that 54 Waterloo region residents died by suicide last year, was a huge wake-up call to people, because you think of the lost potential. You think of the youth that are encapsulated in this 54 and how they took their own life, and that potential will never be realized.

That's a hard thing to measure, but it's an important thing to think about when you're trying to reallocate resources, when you're making the case for resources around early intervention and prevention—because that's where the smart investment is, and that's where the compassionate investment is, as well. I commend our chief of police, Bryan Larkin, who's in his first year in Waterloo region. He said that we're going to have to get to this issue, because his police officers are spending a huge amount of time as they approach calls from,

usually, centre downtown. He says that from 2011 to 2013, Waterloo region police responded to 4,516 calls about a mentally ill person and 3,520 calls about an attempted suicide, not a suicide death. On the whole, each one of those calls takes up to three hours. I would hazard a guess that those calls are basically just about crisis management and don't get to the heart of the very issue.

This entire debate, though, leads me to this excellent report: the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This was an all-party committee: The Chair was Kevin Flynn; Bas Balkissoon was there; France Gélinas; Helena Jaczek; Christine Elliott, who's no longer here; Liz Sandals; Jeff Leal; Sylvia Jones; and Maria Van Bommel. They travelled across the province. They heard from 333 people. I can't imagine the work that went into this, Mr. Speaker, and it is five years old—I will point that out.

They say in their original report: "We began our investigation of mental health and addictions care in Ontario more than 18 months ago, when the select committee was created in February 2009."

We are calling for and are "convinced that a radical transformation of mental health and addictions care is necessary if Ontarians are to get the care they need and deserve."

"From the parents sleeping by their front door to prevent their son from slipping out to buy drugs, to the daughter who dealt with more than 20 health care providers and social service agencies on her mother's behalf, to the husband who was in the room when his wife committed suicide, we have listened to your stories. These were extremely difficult moments for families to share with the select committee.

"There were uplifting moments as well"—which shows the power of intervention, which shows the power of resources being invested. "But it is fair to say that these positive stories" obviously "were in the minority. In general, Ontarians wait too long for treatment. Youth are caught in the gap between programs for children and adults, repeating their case histories to a series of unconnected service providers. First Nations people struggle with above-average rates of mental illness, addictions, and youth suicide owing in part to a history of poverty and the consequences of residential schooling. Francophones are misdiagnosed because they are not treated in their first language. Linguistic and cultural barriers may also affect newcomers and refugees. Seniors unnecessarily languish with depression, often undiagnosed, while society as a whole must face what has been called the coming tsunami of Alzheimer disease."

So here we have this report. We have evidence that there is a desperate need for action, and yet there seems to be—this court order came in over a year ago to deal with some of the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario, who are institutionalized involuntarily and have no recourse whatsoever. They are voiceless. They are almost non-citizens in the province of Ontario. If we were to look at this instance in any other jurisdiction

across the world, we would be writing Amnesty International to fight for their rights, Mr. Speaker. They have no voice; they have no recourse. You can't argue; the courts already found this to be true.

It is about priorities in the province of Ontario. It's about being clear and honest about where this province wants to go with the mental health system, particularly those people who are incarcerated. This report, as it relates to those people who are incarcerated—and the evidence is pretty overwhelming that more and more of those with mental health issues, across the entire spectrum, from eating disorders to psychotic episodes, find themselves in our jails and our institutions. Those institutions are becoming more and more crowded, those conditions are becoming more and more unhealthy, and those institutions are therefore compounding the mental health issues in our community.

It's hard not to think of the select committee's recommendations from five years ago, in that—this is recommendation 19, just for the record: "The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should direct police forces across the province to provide training for officers who may encounter people suffering from mental illnesses and addictions."

Mr. Speaker, we most recently heard of—actually, there are so many examples, but for the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, the story of Sammy Yatim and the videotape that just came out last Monday. To their credit, every media news outlet gave us fair warning before we saw that. As the mother of a teenager, it was incredibly hard to watch. I can't even imagine the pain that the mother would have to experience to watch her son in that condition, which was drug-induced, compounded by mental health issues that were long-standing, and yet one of the recommendations here asks correctional services and police forces to actually have training. That's a reasonable and rational request by all members of every party in the province of Ontario, asking for the skills to be transferred, that knowledge transfer around dealing with mental health issues in extreme cases be part of the mandate of every police officer.

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This transfers over to the education system as well, because when I was part of the coalition for mental health—there is obviously a need and a desire for knowledge from teachers across the province to deal with how behaviour issues will be manifested in mental health issues and how best to diagnose, because you need a solid diagnosis. You need a clear assessment of a child's learning disabilities and mental health issues before you can actually be true to that child and be true to that student and make sure they reach their potential. You need that assessment and, therefore, you need that training. This is not new information, Mr. Speaker.

One other issue based on the select committee as it relates to Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, is recommendation 20. The committee asked that a "core basket of mental health and addictions

services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system navigator and appropriate community services." So these are folks who are incarcerated, who are dealing with mental health issues, and they have no advocate on their side, as has already been determined by the court system as it relates to the Consent and Capacity Board.

For me, one of the first things I did was tour a women's federal prison and I spoke to the staff who are part of the jail system where Ashley Smith actually took her own life. If there was ever an example of the justice system gone wrong as it relates to mental health issues, we should always remember Ashley Smith in every debate that we have on mental health as it relates to incarceration, because that's a young woman whom the system failed. It failed, and it's hard not to imagine that of the 338 individuals whom this piece of legislation will directly affect as it relates to their rights, as it relates to the charter, there isn't an Ashley Smith in that mix. The stats probably would be very supportive of that.

So here we are. We have this opportunity to move this legislation very quickly. I see no reason actually for us to delay it. The court has ordered the changes, and yet this debate still continues on.

For my part, I'm happy, though, to have the opportunity to raise the issue of mental health issues in the province of Ontario and draw attention to the fact that when you have individuals who are court-ordered as it relates to their direction as a patient and as a prisoner, those court orders have funds attached to them as it relates to when the consent and the capacity division makes a decision as it relates to patient care—there is no funding or resources attached to that. That's a huge issue going forward, and it needs to be addressed through amendments to this piece of legislation and, at some point, before it gets too late, this government, which has a majority, which by all accounts supports the recommendations by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which in the second session of the 39th Parliament endorsed this—this was a unanimous endorsement. To date, though, we have only endorsed half of one of the recommendations as it relates to pain medication. We can do more. That's part of this debate, and I look forward to doing more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I agree with her on a lot. I agree with her on the fact that there is a lot more that we can do for mental health. I agree with her when she says that our responsibility is to be a voice for those people who don't have a voice. And that's what this bill specifically does. That very small subset of people who are involuntarily committed because of their illnesses need to have proper justice. They need to have proper recourse. There needs to be transparency. The conditions of their involuntary detainment have to be commensurate with their existing conditions.

We're addressing something very specific. We're ensuring that there's fairness and transparency there. We introduced the bill in September. I think we've had about a month where members could study it, take a look at it. I haven't heard a lot of amendments or suggestions to amendments about that bill, with the exception that you're the only one that I've heard. In every other piece of debate, I haven't heard those suggestions.

I think there's an opportunity for us to get this done by December. I don't think it's that onerous. I don't think it's subverting the legislative process. We're dealing with something that's very specific.

I would like to add one thing to what the member from Kitchener-Waterloo said, with her connection to education and supporting children's mental health: There are a lot of great community-based solutions out there. It's not just us here at Queen's Park or the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. There are great opportunities to partner in communities, as we've done in Ottawa with the school board, the city of Ottawa public health and the federal government, in some circumstances, to provide addictions counselling and treatment in schools, and some suicide prevention as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'd like to follow up on the comments from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. It's a comprehensive overview on the area that she represents as well. But we're trying to strike a balance, not only human rights, but also the need for hospitalization in so many cases where someone's condition is deteriorating or they're a danger to themselves, or the threat of committing suicide when unsupervised.

For 20 years, I worked for the Addiction Research Foundation. We had a clinical institute over at 33 Russell Street, now closed. We finally merged with what became the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which provides involuntary detention and also detention for referrals through the criminal justice system. They're subject to the Public Hospitals Act; they're subject, obviously, to the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act for reasons that we have been discussing during this debate.

In addition, because I used to work with part of that organization, they have a client relations office, as many hospitals do. They have an empowerment council. There was a lot of talk about this when I worked there; maybe 25 years ago we talked about this. They have a psychiatric patient advocate office—it's a program under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—and they have rights advisers.

So beyond the legislation, there are these other structures in place. We have learned over the last 150 years in this field; however, a judge has indicated there is more work to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for a lot of insight, not only into the

bill but into each of our communities where people struggle every day with mental health issues, with substance abuse issues.

Now, the member from Ottawa South talked about the need to be partnering and that there are good partnerships and things in our communities. But, in fact, there's a whole mishmash of services that are available across the province.

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Unfortunately, and I know this from my own community, a lot of people aren't even aware of some of those services that are available or, if they are aware of them, the wait-lists to get into them. You could have a child, for example, with a threat of suicide, who will get to Pathstone for an initial assessment, but they will never get back for treatment for six, eight or 10 weeks. Parents are taking their kids from Niagara to Hamilton, to McMaster, because they hope that their child will be able to see a child psychiatrist there at the hospital and perhaps be admitted to one of the 10 beds that are available in the south end of Niagara, for their child who is cutting themselves, threatening suicide or attempting to hang themselves.

I know Teresa Armstrong, the member from London-Fanshawe, brought forward Bill 95 a few months ago, which would see a committee of sorts, a panel set up with experts from the mental health field, all coming together and making sure that these 350 or 400 agencies for adults, and another 300 or 400 for children, all come under one umbrella, so that we make sure that the resources are equitably distributed where the greatest need is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm happy to participate in this important debate today. I know we're talking about a very specific and narrow amendment to the Mental Health Act, but a number of MPPs have discussed today the importance of children's and youth mental health. As the Minister for Children and Youth Services, I just want to talk a little bit about that, because we want our children and youth in the province to have all the support they need, and their families to have all the support they need when it comes to their mental health.

We know that 750,000 more kids and their families are benefiting from quicker, easier access. There is more work to do, but more investments began to roll out in 2011, increasing to \$93 million a year, part of the greater than \$444 million a year we invest in children's and youth mental health.

I know it's not just about investing the money. As members opposite say, it's about coordinating the service. So what my ministry is in the process of doing is that we have named lead agencies for children and mental health across the province—33 in total, I believe. It's not to replace existing service providers; it's to coordinate services, so families can navigate better, so they can get the information they need, they can get the assessments they need. It's also for those lead agencies to work with other partners, such as school boards, hospitals

and community groups, to make sure that we're doing the very best we can for children and youth in this province.

We've helped hire 770 new mental health workers in Ontario for young people, and our Tele-Mental Health Service has provided over 4,800 psychiatric consults to children and youth in our rural and remote areas. That's something I hear a lot, Speaker: Sometimes access is better in the urban areas, but we need to do more, and we are doing more to help children and youth throughout the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for her reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to thank the members from Ottawa South, Haldimand-Norfolk and Welland and the Minister of Children and Youth Services for their comments. It's true: This is a specific and narrow amendment to the Mental Health Act, but it is also an opportunity for us to challenge ourselves to be better.

I would agree, though, with the member from Ottawa South that there are community resources out there. The minister referenced this. Kids Help Phone is one of those resources. One of the first things I did when I was chair of the mental health coalition was to write a letter of support for additional ministry funding, because the Kids Help Phone line is available across the entire province. No matter where you are, in the northernmost remote community, it's a free line, and it's a proven, researched, evidence-based resource for children and youth. It proved to be very successful. Those are the kinds of programs, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to need to be supportive.

I also think that we do need to address the stigma attached to mental health. To that end, when my daughter was younger, eight or nine years old, she had early onset anxiety. We went to Mosaic family counselling and there was this amazing program called Setting Free the Butterflies. As soon as she walked into that room, with those other young children, and she saw that she wasn't the only one that had this anxiety, it was like the weight of the world fell off her shoulder. So the smart money and the compassionate investment is on early intervention and the prevention and the focus on what mental well-being is. The school systems are definitely a part of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker—and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, which is something I'm going to be focusing on here a bit. I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Speaker, I think we heard in this debate that all of us, every one of us in this House, is very committed to and passionate about the issue of mental health. I think that no party or individual has a monopoly on compassion.

We all have experienced mental illness, whether it's ourselves, our families, our circle of friends, or, indeed, our constituents. I think we have all had people come to our constituency offices and share their stories of trying to navigate our mental health system, with advice on how to make the system work better. I think all of us have listened very carefully to those people. We have acted on that advice that we have heard, and our mental health and addictions strategy demonstrates our commitment to continuing to improve the services available to people.

One of the things where we've made the greatest improvement when it comes to mental illness in this country in the past decade is the stigma-busting part. I don't think a decade ago many people would have stood up in a place like this and talked about their personal experience with mental illness, but we've heard that today. Certainly, I have had within my family, definitely, encounters with mental illness. I'm pleased to say that people did get the care that they needed, and they are off again on that productive life where they can contribute, where they have the ability to contribute to the community and participate in the community.

Whether it's somebody like Michael Wilson standing up after his son committed suicide to talk about the importance of at least beginning the conversation—I heard Clara Hughes interviewed on CBC Radio this weekend with Shelagh Rogers. She talked about her experience with depression and mental illness. Those conversations have taken us a long way to recognizing that there is no family that is not touched by mental illness of some regard.

What I did want to bring to this conversation is how our Poverty Reduction Strategy is actually addressing mental illness. Particularly I wanted to talk about our commitment that I announced last week, our commitment to end chronic homelessness over the next decade. We know we can do that in this province, Speaker, because across the province, we've seen municipalities partnering with community organizations and other partners, and actually, one by one, getting people housed, using primarily the Housing First philosophy, which really states that if you are homeless, it's pretty hard to deal with the issues that you're dealing with, whether it's addiction, mental health or whatever the issue is, when you are not in a stable housing situation.

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So the Housing First philosophy has proven to be extraordinarily successful at getting people housed, first, and the supports they need to stay housed. We're seeing remarkable success.

I thought I would share one story from my community. A gentleman, Fred, had been homeless for 15 years. He had significant mental health and addiction challenges. For 15 years, he slept under bridges, in tents, in shelters sometimes. In the year prior to getting housed through London CAReS Housing First organization, he had been to the emergency department of the hospital, often by ambulance, 250 times; for two out of every three days, he was in the ER. He had over 400 encounters with

the police; more than one a day, on average. In the year following his housing, he had no encounters with the police and had two visits to the emergency department. So, obviously, his quality of life was far greater, but the community was better off too, because those other resources—whether it was the ER, the police or the justice system—could be used in a way that we expect those resources to be used.

We do know that with the right supports, a lot of people struggling with mental illness and addictions can get the treatment they need, can get stabilized, and can become contributing members of our community, which is, of course, what they want and what we all want as well. This particular bill does not deal with that, but I think we're all giving ourselves licence to talk about some of the successes that we're having and some of the challenges that still remain.

Speaker, on that note, I will pass it over to my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to join in the debate this afternoon on this very important bill that I think really shows that we need to balance, in the Mental Health Act, aspects of community safety with the appropriate access to treatment for individuals suffering from a mental health issue.

These amendments go a long way. Not only are they aligning with the charter as, in fact, the Court of Appeal has required that they do, but there are a number of efficiency measures in relation to the powers of the Consent and Capacity Board so that, in fact, that board will be able to make a limited range of additional orders in specific circumstances when it reviews a long-term, involuntary patient's certificate of continuation. It will allow that other physicians—not just psychiatrists—and also nurse practitioners will be able to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. This will free up existing psychiatrist capacity for the more complex hearings anticipated by the amendments.

As was mentioned here today by a member of the former Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I think that we continue to see the work that we did on that select committee influence government policy. The President of the Treasury Board, the Deputy Premier, made reference to the fact that our 10-year mental health and addictions strategy has addressed what we heard in the over 300 hearings that our committee held—because we need to recognize that one in five Ontarians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime.

Our strategy: The first three years did specifically address children with mental health issues, those suffering with addictions. But as we move forward into phase 2 of the comprehensive mental health strategy, we are looking at more community supports. In fact, our government has, overall, doubled the funding for mental health and addictions services in Ontario, so that it is now at a total of over \$1 billion. In phase 2 of the comprehensive addiction strategy, some \$138 million over three

years will be going to community agencies to address better access, quality and value, so that, again, people have these supports if they move out of an institution and into the community.

As the Minister of Community and Social Services, I do have the mandate to support and provide services to individuals with a dual diagnosis. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you know that these are individuals with a developmental disability who also suffer from mental health issues. Specifically, I need and continue to work with my colleagues to support these individuals. We have many great agencies doing wonderful work in the community and we need to make sure these sorts of supports and services are more generally available to individuals suffering with a dual diagnosis, specifically.

I urge all members to support Bill 122. It provides a step forward in terms of the care of those with mental health issues in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I want to say how honoured I am to say a few words on this particular bill, but especially to follow the last two speakers. I originally served on a committee on poverty reduction with the President of the Treasury Board, and I also served on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions with my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services, but on top of that, I had the privilege to serve on the Select Committee on Developmental Disabilities. I have to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that those were three committees that I served on where I gained a lot of knowledge of this particular issue.

If I could say, this bill in front of us is responding to the Ontario Court of Appeal decision for those who are involuntarily detained for more than six months in one of our institutions. To understand why this bill is here and why it's progressive, one probably has to go back about 40 or 50 or 60 years. I was astonished, when I served on the Select Committee on Mental Health. We had the opportunity to tour some of the institutions in Ontario at the time. Many decades ago, families used to actually commit their children to these institutions, never to return home. It was a permanent committal to these types of institutions because, back then, society did not know how to deal with mental health. They did not know how to deal with some of the issues surrounding behaviour. We have come a long way, as you can see. The courts have decided that if somebody is going to be committed to one of these places, you must have a regular review of that process—that that person is not capable of moving back into society and living a life like everyone else.

The important thing here is that we have learned, over the last couple of decades, that there are varying forms of mental health issues. As we heard from the other speakers, one in five will suffer some form of mental health issue—depression, stress, behavioural patterns, etc.—as we go forward.

This particular bill is in front of us because it was ordered by the court. It's very technical in nature, if you

read it, but it provides the board that is in the Mental Health Act, the Consent and Capacity Board, more opportunities to review someone who is involuntarily committed to an institution of psychiatric care or some other mental health care—that there is constant review, and the family or the individual or even the practitioners who are dealing with this particular person's problem would have an opportunity to review their state and whether they belong in the right institution. The board will also have the opportunity to deal with transferring them to an institution of higher care or lower care, all at the same time.

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Mr. Speaker, I would say that if you look at how we treated those with mental health and addictions four or five decades ago, what we're doing today is very progressive. I would say that our own government has come a long way in the last 10 years to make sure we are addressing the issues of mental health and addiction. In fact, the first phase of this government's plan was to address children, especially in early identification of behavioural problems that would lead to serious mental health issues in the future. Mr. Speaker, I would say to you, based on the knowledge gained serving on these committees, that I'm proud to support this bill, because it's one step better in the system, and I urge everyone to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly very pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words, as well, about an issue that I think means a great deal to all of us. I think it is reflective of the discussion that is going on in the Legislature today among all the parties that this is indeed an issue that to some real degree brings us all together with the understanding of how important it is that we find not just the right tone, but the right decisions that we're making. Certainly, the increased resources we are putting into the mental health system are really important.

I'm glad to have a chance to speak about it, perhaps a little bit from the perspective of being a member from northern Ontario, where some of the challenges of providing those resources are somewhat more demanding. I know that is certainly well understood by many members of this Legislature. I also appreciate the comments made by my colleagues the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the member for Scarborough–Rouge River. I think the member for Scarborough–Rouge River is so right in saying that we are very much a different society now than we were 25 or 30 years ago, as well we should be.

I am very proud of the work the select committee did. Again, I think that was a great example of all three parties in this Legislature working together with common cause and a real goal. I'm very proud of the comprehensive strategy that we're bringing forward here, particularly as we move into phase 2. I think that's going to be crucial.

I'm also actually very excited—and I don't mean this in a partisan way at all—but we now have had a federal election, and my federal colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North, MP-elect—I guess she hasn't been sworn in—is Patty Hajdu, H-A-J-D-U. She was a wonderful candidate. She's been elected. She was the former executive director of Shelter House Thunder Bay, somebody who is focused very much on many of the issues that we're actually discussing today. I'm very excited about working with her on these kinds of issues.

From a northern Ontario perspective, we are grateful for the resources that are being added to the strategy, but there's no question that there are larger issues that can very much relate to the geographic realities of being from northern Ontario. I live in the city of Thunder Bay, but I represent a much larger riding that includes 11 First Nations and many communities outside. Sometimes being able to provide those resources—I mean, I'm proud of the rather extraordinary work that's done by organizations like the Children's Centre and many other organizations in northwestern Ontario. I think we need to continue to understand that putting those resources in place is so crucial and important.

The debate today is about an amendment—a very specific amendment—to the Mental Health Act, and it's an important discussion. But again, I think that having the opportunity to at least stand here and express my support for the strategy that's been put in place, eagerness to continue to work with the federal government on continuing to see more resources being put in place, and also to have a chance to speak about some of the challenges we have in northern Ontario is important to me and to my constituents.

I will tell you that I have frequent discussions, actually as recently as yesterday, with one of the senior medical officials in Thunder Bay—a psychiatrist, in fact—who talked about the need to continue to try and find more resources for those particular kinds of positions that are more difficult to fill in northern Ontario, and how important they are.

Ultimately, what it comes down to, is, I believe, again, the statistic is—and I think it's an accurate one—that over the course of time, one in five people will be dealing with a mental health issue. It's incredibly important that we find a way to not just find the resources to help them so we can work toward prevention, so we can work toward some of the solutions, but also to have the compassion and the kindness that we really need, I think, in order for all of us to be able to work together in a more caring fashion. Ultimately, I think that should be a goal for all of us in life. Certainly one of my goals as I age is to become a kinder human being simply because I think that the benefits are not just mine but there are many others as well. Regardless, I certainly am pleased to have had a chance to say a few words related to this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to rise today and add a few more minutes of comment to this. I did speak last

week, and it has been great to hear the conversation today from all three parties in this House. Certainly as an Ontario PC, I and my caucus colleagues recognize the devastating effects mental illness and the attached stigma have on the lives of thousands of Ontarians.

To us, it's about inclusion, about challenging people's attitudes to mental health. As we've heard a lot about here today, stigma is one of those things that for many years kept this in the backrooms, kept it in the dark, and it's great to see that people are willing to step out and actually acknowledge and be there to support. One of the things that I certainly talked about a fair bit last week in my discussion was a plea to everyone out there, that everyone can be involved. To the person who's struggling and challenged, for them to feel comfortable to step out and ask for help: that's one of the biggest things I think we can do. As a friend, a family member or just a colleague, maybe even a stranger, if someone actually extends that hand, to be prepared to say, "We're here to help. We'll do what we can"—just an ear to listen to those people who are struggling and challenged.

Mental health, in my mind, is just as important as physical health, but for many years we have always looked at the physical because you can see it, you can feel it and you can understand it. Mental health is much more challenging to diagnose, to really understand and to even perceive if someone is struggling with that. So I think it's important that we need to treat it as importantly and definitely move forward. It affects Ontarians of every age and demographic, and yet services, in my mind, remain inadequate. It's good to see legislation coming forward so that we can do that, and definitely to be there for our most vulnerable.

In my own backyard, Wes for Youth is a program started by Yolanda and Jamie Cameron which I have talked about here many, many times. It's an honour and a legacy to their son who had committed suicide. Wes for Youth Online—it's open to the world, really, to be able to be a resource. Certainly, Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services—Phil Dodd is the executive director—the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Victim Services are all agencies in my own backyard of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound that provide those very critical services. I applaud anyone who will step up and support this. We need to do more and do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I just wanted to look at a bit of the history of this situation. I mean, 30, 40 years ago we knew the horror stories that used to go on in these types of hospitals, and it wasn't necessarily the staff's fault or the doctors' fault. It was the lack of funding. I still have people who come into my constituency office who are having problems with this situation and the funding is not there. You can increase the ability for people to look into these situations by a governing body, but if you cut the funding at the same time, it's counterproductive.

Mental illness has always required extra financing throughout the decades, and it always falls short. It's one

of the last social services that gets the funding required. Now, with the state of things in the world and our country and the increased stress in the world and more people facing financial difficulties, it becomes a bigger problem—a bigger problem that requires bigger funding. Hopefully, with the new federal government that's in place, they may consider some transfer payments to help the health system in Ontario as well as many other things—housing and things like that, which also has an impact on mental health, as the deputy leader put out. She said that she had a guy who was taking up police resources in his community because of his illness, plus the hospitalization and things like that. Those are the types of situations that have to be addressed to alleviate some of our special-needs people from being counter-productive to the system, not through fault of their own, but for lack of attention. I'm hoping that as they look at this new jurisdiction level, they also would look at increasing funding for this thing that's been an ongoing problem for decades.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I also am delighted to have an opportunity to say a few words on this particular bill. I was listening very intently to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo as she was speaking. It was delightful to see the fact that there is such widespread agreement for this bill as it's moving forward through the House.

I made a little heckle—a joke—at the time about let's time-allocate it, and I couldn't help but notice that the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London kind of threw his hands up in the air and shook his head.

If this isn't one of those bills where we have to expect and would like to see debate collapse quickly, I'm not sure what is. It's so clear that on our side of the House, the conversation from the President of the Treasury Board and others—the member from Scarborough-Rouge River—wasn't to the bill itself because we're quite confident, on this side of the House, that we've got the terms and conditions of this bill correct and that it needs to move forward on a very tight time frame in order to get it in place for the December 22 drop-dead date, if I can call it that.

This is one of those kinds of bills where I would love to see the various whips of the parties get together and agree so that we can move forward. Alternatively, as much as it is tremendous to hear about the personal stories that we all can bring to a debate on issues of this type, it would be really useful if the members on the other side, if they had concerns with specific provisions and other ways that they thought maybe the Consent and Capacity Board should be able to review a person who has been detained in a long-term facility post-six months, or other ideas or amendments that they wanted to suggest—that we could have a debate specifically about those.

In my own family—and I know that other members have talked about this—we've had issues. I had a nephew

who ultimately committed suicide because he was suffering from demons that he couldn't get his hand on. And although he wouldn't have fallen into the particular characters of this legislation because he wasn't being detained for six months, it was one of those situations that within a hospital, he had an opportunity to leave, and they granted it to him probably prematurely.

So let's move this bill forward as quickly as possible into committee, and let's get the deadline done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to this bill and speak to the comments of the members opposite.

I don't think anybody argues the necessity of some changes to this bill. The biggest point of this thing is why are we waiting until now to do this? It was a year ago that the court ordered this to be changed. So here we are; it's the first week of November. Next week, we have a break in the Legislature for Remembrance Day. It doesn't leave us a lot of time to get this bill through the House and done before, possibly, there could be many people turned out on the street and released from institutions, and maybe they shouldn't be out on the street.

It's interesting that this has happened the way it has happened, the timing of this bill. I sometimes wonder if the government is spending so much time addressing their scandals that they haven't had time enough to do stuff like this. I think that maybe that's the problem here. They have had to manage all these scandals—they've had a number this year—and they haven't had time to address important bills such as this, and that's really too bad; it really is. Because we're talking about people who—I have known a number of people who have committed suicide—have issues that need to be addressed. This is very important. Through no fault of their own they have had these issues—had some mental problems—and yet, the government has taken all this time to do it.

I would suggest that the next time something important like this comes along, they take a harder look at things and maybe assign somebody to do this for them, because this really is silly, that it's taken a year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members has two minutes to respond.

I'm pleased to recognize the Deputy Premier, President of the Treasury Board and minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Beaches-East York and Perth-Wellington for commenting in this round.

Speaker, I was all set to say how great it was that we actually all were agreeing, until, unfortunately, we were scolded a little bit for not moving forward more quickly on this.

I think if the worst criticism somebody can have on a piece of legislation is that we should have done it sooner, then I think we do have everyone agreeing that this is something we do need to move forward with. I, for one, look forward to getting this piece of legislation passed so that we can move on and deal with other issues that will be before this House.

I do appreciate people who have participated in the debate and who have shared, I think, some personal stories about their experience with mental illness. I do think we are all united in our determination to do more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jack McLaren: I am here today to speak in support of Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

Every day, we here at Queen's Park wake up, perhaps have a cup of coffee, maybe a bit of breakfast. Some may head to the gym or even out for a jog. Others may delve into the newspaper or respond to emails while they wait for their day to begin. We congregate here every morning and stand before our supporters and protesters, strong and seemingly undaunted.

Now imagine, if you will, not being capable of doing this. Imagine waking up in the morning and being immediately apprehensive about just getting out of bed. Imagine having every possible scenario of what could go wrong in your day enter your mind in a flood of overwhelming and crippling emotion. Are terrorists going to storm the Legislature? Will we be bombed? Will there be another fire like there was in 1909? What about the commute over to the office? What if I get mugged on the subway?

Then you begin to think of what could happen if you continued to stay in bed. Would the apartment catch fire? Could I be robbed? Are terrorists going to come to my dwelling? Will I be able to pay the rent this month if I don't go to work? Will I lose my job if I don't go to work?

When and if you finally do get the courage to go outside, you begin to wonder: Is everyone looking at me? I don't think that ticket booth person likes me. Which door should I go in? If I go in the west entrance, everyone could see me from their windows. The east entrance means a very long walk, with people staring at me inside, while I go to the west tower elevator. Should I take the elevator? What if it malfunctions and I get stuck in it?

These thoughts seem completely irrational and unbelievable to some, but for someone with a mild anxiety disorder, this is just a regular day. The feelings felt in this example are real and were given to me by a constituent of mine who suffers from a very mild form of anxiety. I cannot imagine starting every day like this, much less having it last all day, every day, for a lifetime.

Anxiety isn't always something that is programmed into your brain when you are born. It can be brought on by media and world events, personal encounters, or even traumatic brain injuries. As a result of an aneurysm, a person from my riding suffers tremendously. Not only

does she have physical pain and noticeable cognitive and physical impairments from her trauma but she also has anxiety. She spends most of her days protected behind the four walls of her home. Going into public makes her feel naked and vulnerable. She excitedly makes plans to meet with family members months in advance, and when the times comes to follow through with these plans, the excitement subsides and the debilitating fears consume her. Although they only live 30 minutes apart, she has not seen one of her sisters in over a year. She does not go shopping, attend family functions or visit with her daughter anymore like she used to. This woman was considered the lively, outgoing sibling in her family and now she has become a hermit who is limited by a hidden illness.

1730

The symptoms of anxiety and those of depression can sometimes be confused. When you suffer from anxiety, you feel that you struggle to do the things that most people do with relative ease every day. With depression, you may no longer be interested in participating in the things you were once capable of and enjoyed doing.

When a person with depression reveals their illness, the question they dread hearing most is, "What are you depressed about?" This is where education of mental illness is so important. A person who suffers from clinical depression rarely, if ever, has a say in what they are depressed about. Depression is very different from normal sadness in that it totally consumes your day-to-day life. It interferes with your ability to work, study, eat, sleep and have fun. The feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and worthlessness are intense and unrelenting, with little, if any, relief. Some have compared depression to being in an overwhelming rut that is so deep, you feel you will never escape. The walls are tall, slick and closing in on you. Sadness is not always a symptom of depression. For some men in particular, anger, aggression and restlessness are common signs of depression. Some begin to engage in unusual or reckless behaviour, which may include excessive alcohol or drug abuse.

A mental illness we recently hear about a lot, especially since the war in Afghanistan, is post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. Soldiers, police officers, firefighters and paramedics are who we generally think of when we think of persons who experience this kind of mental illness due to the dramatic things they have witnessed in their lifetime. But, really, any traumatic event can cause you to suffer from PTSD, as everyone copes differently with stress and traumatic events.

Again, I will use examples from my own riding. A young man from one of our area school boards is a custodian on the night shift at a downtown Ottawa school. He stepped outside one spring evening to relax while on break from his shift. Moments later, he was attacked from behind, knocked to the ground, assaulted, had his wallet and cellphone stolen and his glasses broken.

This gentleman was from a small town on the west side of Ottawa. Just being downtown working was a

fairly new experience for him, much less being assaulted and robbed while he was at work. After all, training to be a custodian in a school system doesn't exactly prepare you for the effects of being mugged. To go back to that school and surround himself with the same atmosphere and the possibility of it happening again was quite terrifying to him. He did return to work, but only for a few days.

With the encouragement of his friend and a co-worker, he approached his supervisor about the fear he felt with coming back to this location. After being evaluated by a board doctor and being diagnosed with PTSD, and treated for a few weeks, the young man was sent to work at a different location while he continued to receive treatment. Thankfully for him, this option was available and he could continue to work. Luckily for this man, he noticed he had an issue, was diagnosed and treated.

Too often, this is not the case for individuals who suffer from PTSD. Being attacked by a burglar or having been surrounded by a hail of gunfire are not always necessary to suffer from PTSD. This rang true for one of my constituency assistants one January evening in 2002, when her car was hit head-on by a sport utility vehicle while travelling home from work. Her lower leg was shattered and severed. Every bone in her face was broken and both jawbones fractured several times. One of those bones from her jaw protruded from her left cheek. She hung upside down, strapped to the seat for over an hour before she was put into an ambulance, fully conscious, and rushed to the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

While on the way to the hospital, her blood pressure dropped twice to the point that the paramedics thought they would lose her. Once at the hospital, she was in shock and had her superficial wounds stitched up and was then placed in a medically induced coma for the next week, while she underwent extensive surgeries. Her parents stated that, after the accident, she knew what happened and even named the type of vehicle that had collided with her. Once she was allowed to awake from the coma, she knew nothing of the events that had taken place to put her in the hospital.

Doctors say that her brain blocked the trauma and, some day, she may recall the accident—though to her dismay, she still has not to this day. After her accident, she had bad dreams and several flashbacks pertaining to the accident. The sound of glass breaking, of being swept off the floor, would make her heart race and cause her to nearly break into tears. She was diagnosed with PTSD. She was diagnosed early, treated and, now, has minimal effects from PTSD, though she does still suffer from a mild traumatic brain injury.

One of the most frighteningly named disorders under the mental illness umbrella is dissociative identity disorder, or multiple personality disorder. I was once told a story about a young person who, while they were in high school, battled depression and suicide. Guidance counselors, psychiatrists and psychiatric hospital stays didn't seem to help the child, so she sort of fell by the wayside. She continued on, struggling her way into and through

adulthood. She told stories to her friends of having brain tumours and a child no one had ever met. She would show up with bumps and bruises and slashes on her arms and legs. There were stories of abuse and groups of men attacking her and kidnapping her.

She had friends on Facebook whom no one else knew, but would request friendships with a few of her friends and have Facebook friendships with them. Eventually, one of these mysterious people began to threaten the friends of the woman. Soon, the woman thankfully confided in her friend and told her that she had been diagnosed with multiple personality disorder. The friend was relieved and now understood that all the lies were not really lies. They were merely her illness acting out. The multiple Facebook accounts of random friends that were befriending and taunting her friends were actually accounts that the different personalities had set up. Unfortunately for this person, she will struggle for the rest of her life because there is no cure for this disorder.

1740

Mental illness affects more people in Canada than any other type of health problem. People suffer in so many different ways, from extreme and permanent mental illness to intermittent to recurring illness, to occasional or even one-time troubles.

Mental illness can include everything from severely criminally-inclined schizophrenia to postpartum depression for new mothers, to lack-of-self-esteem-driven depression in maturing teenagers, to chronic, lifelong recurring depression, to one-time, event-driven depression such as physical trauma, job loss, divorce or death in the family.

Depression in developing teenagers as they struggle with growing from a child to an adult can be traumatic and, for some, unbearable, with the tragic ending of suicide, which is devastating for families and communities. It is so terrible to see young lives lost; and for those who live with depression, so terrible to see the anguish, the suffering and the sadness; so terrible to see the complete lack of joy and accomplishment.

Depression can drive people to live on the streets and become street people, caught up in the vicious cycle of prostitution, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime. These are often young people from middle-class families, but they are trying to cope with mental illness and they are not doing well.

The Ottawa police chief said at a public meeting in Ottawa that 60% of policemen's time on the streets is spent with mentally ill people. He said that we need more people properly trained in mental illness to work with mentally ill people on the street; that it would be better care; that policemen are not specifically trained in mental illness and therefore are not necessarily the best people to be on the streets with mentally ill people.

Schizophrenia is a devastating disease. I know two sisters who are well educated and respected as experts in their field of work. They started and operated a successful not-for-profit business that was much used by many families, and they were successful at fundraising to

keep the business going. The business was growing. Then they were both struck with schizophrenia. They imagined that their homes were being broken into, that there were spies, that there were people trying to hurt them or even kill them. Their lives were destroyed, and it was all in their heads.

There can be a seasonal depression from the short, dark days of winter. It is documented that in northern countries like Canada, there is more depression in winter than in summer because of our shorter winter days. Christmastime can be a depressing time for some people, especially people who are alone, people who are divorced or had a spouse die or a parent or family member die, or are just alone at a time when everyone else seems to be happy and celebrating the festive season.

Job loss and poverty can cause great anxiety and unhappiness, resulting in broken families and mental illness.

Mental health can be a fragile thing, and sometimes needs special attention to preserve and protect it. Mental illness affects many times more people than physical illness. Mental illness is a huge cost to employers because of the high cost of absenteeism on sick days. The total financial cost of mental health care in Ontario is about \$15 billion per year. The biggest cost of all is the cost of sadness and anguish to mentally ill people and their families.

Living with mental illness is a courageous battle, as only the sufferers and possibly their families know the true agony they are in. So we must do better. We must do more. As a caring society, we have a moral obligation to help those who cannot help themselves.

Mr. Speaker, our party supports this bill strongly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think the theme here is that those personal stories resonate across all the ridings, and they anchor the need for us to actually move forward with progressive legislation.

Now, it's true, though, that this piece, Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, is quite narrow and demands a specific—of course, we are debating it because the court has ordered us to do so, but the general theme is that we are recognizing the need to balance public safety concerns with the need to properly protect the rights of patients.

This case, though, was brought forward by the appellant, a mental health patient who was initially sentenced to a 45-month criminal sentence for sexual assault against a child, which was completed back in 1996, and has subsequently been involuntarily committed to a maximum security mental health institution since then, for the last 19 years—19 years, Mr. Speaker. Now, the appellant also, in this instance—and this was the motivator for this court case—is deaf and has only had limited and sporadic access to interpreters throughout his 19-year confinement, inhibiting treatment. What has actually happened is that the Consent and Capacity Board has reviewed the appellant's involuntary detention on a yearly basis, and they have concluded that he does not

belong in a maximum security facility. But the reason why this legislation is on the floor of this Legislature today is because the Consent and Capacity Board has no powers to do the right thing for this particular individual.

Now, this individual obviously has other diagnoses, multiple diagnoses. The member actually referenced the complexity of cases such as this, but we have a duty in this House to ensure that the legislation and the law are working for all Ontarians, regardless of how they came to be in these circumstances. The broader issue of mental health in the province of Ontario—the act is open; we should take the opportunity to address the long-standing systemic issues that pertain to mental health in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It is truly a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 122, the Mental Health Act. I've been thinking about it as I've been listening to the many comments here today. In particular, the MPP for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I want to thank you for your heartfelt comments. One thing that comes to me is that every one of the members in this Legislature has experienced constituents who have had difficulties with mental health issues. There's nothing that's more despairing than when you're trying to help and you're sometimes challenged to find solutions.

In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, I had a mental health town hall that was absolutely packed. At that time, in the spring, in April of this year, I decided to create a task force or an advocacy group to look at the various, different aspects of mental health care in my community. We have many program providers that are extremely good at what they do, but as has been stated, sometimes we don't always collaborate the best we can with each other, or we're not aware of a particular program that a service provider has in our riding.

The amendments would, if passed, ensure that the Mental Health Act would align with the charter and, at the same time, enhance the rights of involuntary long-term patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities. I think this is extremely important. Every Ontarian should enjoy good and the best possible mental health and well-being throughout their lives, and Ontarians with mental health or addictions can recover and participate in welcoming supportive communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills on the remarks he made. He went through a number of different life-changing events that people can experience and then learn to live with, if they're fortunate enough to get the right care, the right treatment and the right medication. But there are many people, as a number of people have said here today, who do fall through the cracks and are unable to receive that treatment.

1750

Earlier today, when I was listening to the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and others speaking, it

reminded me—I didn't read it closely enough, but I had an email from my office earlier this afternoon, when we were going to debate this, and it talked about how more funding is going to be provided by the local LHIN in Sarnia–Lambton, and a lot of it is going to be directed toward handling mental health cases. I think it's going to be leading-edge funding in our riding that they're going to take a look at. Hopefully, it will be able to help other people in other parts of the province as we administer this.

As we said earlier, our caucus fully supports this. We question why it has taken this long to get here, but we are here now.

Last week's Health Quality Ontario annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital re-admission rates for patients with mental illness or addictions have not improved in five years and suicide rates have not improved in a decade. We need to do better for our most vulnerable people.

We need to work, also, to combat the stigma, which a number of speakers have dwelled upon, that's associated with mental health and start talking about how we can provide greater access to the treatment that each and every one of our fellow citizens deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I know that this bill is in place to try to balance public safety concerns versus charter rights and the court order for individuals who are currently being detained—I think 338 of them across the province.

I haven't heard anyone speak about the violence that occurs on psychiatric units in our hospitals across the province. I don't know if any of you had an opportunity to watch the program this week—I think it was on Saturday evening, on Marketplace. It talked about the number of nurses, RNs and RPNs, who are being assaulted in our hospitals—severely assaulted in some cases, with broken jaws. I hazard a guess that many of these assaults are happening on psychiatric units.

Being a nurse and representing nurses for over 40 years—it is common for staff to be assaulted on psychiatric units. There's an imbalance there, as well—making sure, when we're looking after patients with mental health issues, that there are enough staff in place on units all the time; not just during those working hours, but during lunch breaks and coffee breaks, to make sure that nurses and psychiatric workers in our hospitals are safe and that they can go home at the end of the day to their families without being injured—in some cases,

dead. I know that there were 760 cases in Ontario alone over a six-year period and only three charges laid by the Ministry of Labour, so something more certainly needs to be done on that aspect, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack McLaren: I would like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Kingston and the Islands, Sarnia–Lambton and Welland for their comments. It's wonderful to be part of a debate where we are all in agreement.

The member from Kingston and the Islands having a town hall meeting—I think that's wonderful. It's a great idea, something we should probably all copy and do. I'm sure we could all fill the town hall, because I'm sure every community has almost exactly the same problem.

I had the privilege of sitting on a select committee here, about a year and a half ago, for the developmentally disabled, which was a learning experience, a very poignant time. The reason I got on to that is because parents of autistic children came into my office and told me what it was like in their homes, and they told me how little we do to help them with developmentally disabled intellectual problems.

During our travels, we heard many people speak to the committee, and they talked about dual diagnosis, which is having autism or fetal alcohol syndrome or one of these other troubles, plus mental illness, which would be a consequence of having these other terrible afflictions. Those would be very complicated things to deal with because they already have a huge problem with their other ailments.

Mental illness is one of those things which have been very much neglected in almost every respect: work-wise, attention-wise, funding-wise. Certainly, that committee, which I was very proud to be part of—the first page said that all the care that is needed should be mandated. Imagine if you ever had a broken leg or a heart attack and you went to the hospital and they said, "We ran out of broken-leg money. Go home and good luck," which is what we do for developmentally disabled and, very often, for mentally ill people.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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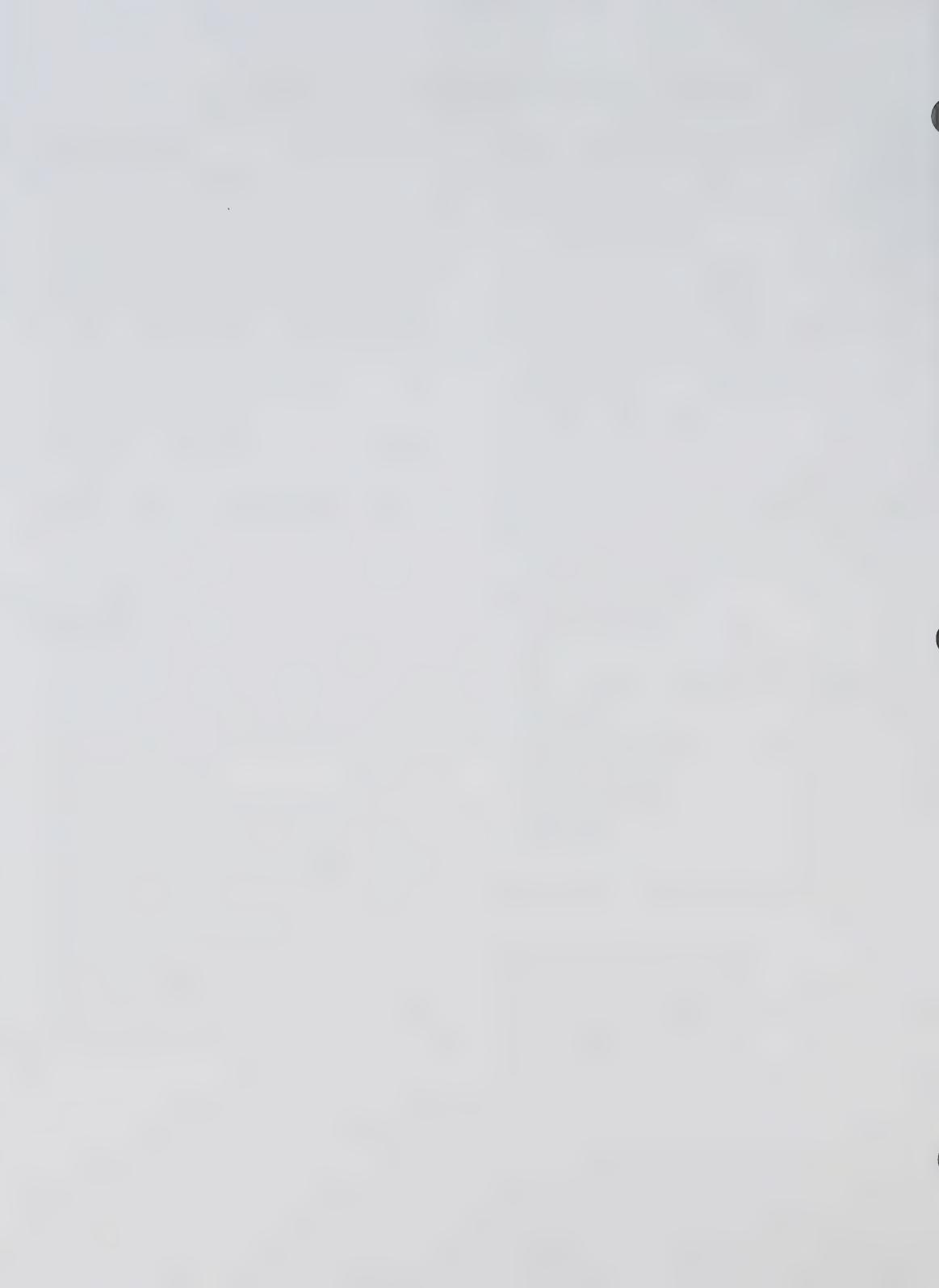
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 November 2015

Mardi 3 novembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Mr. Chiarelli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Today, I rise to move second reading of Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. If passed, this act would establish in law a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs. This is consistent with our government's commitment to enhance transparency and community participation through open data, open dialogue and open government initiatives.

It would support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by empowering the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, to competitively procure transmission projects, and it would introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families and businesses conserve energy and water to help manage costs at both the retail customer level and the system as a whole.

Before I pass on to my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville, I wanted to highlight the three core components of this important piece of legislation. Firstly, our government recognizes that sound, prudent long-term energy planning is essential to a clean, reliable and affordable energy future. The best way to ensure that kind of robust system planning occurs is to consult with

the public, First Nations, industry and the energy stakeholder community. The Ministry of Energy has developed our long-term energy plans to include broad consultations with the public and stakeholders. It's a transparent process for establishing the government's key goals and priorities for the province's energy system.

Today, our government is proposing legislation that would provide a statutory basis for this long-term energy planning process. The proposed legislation would ensure a consistent, long-term planning process is followed. As well, it would enshrine in legislation Ontario's Open Government Initiative by making consultation with the public, stakeholders and aboriginal groups throughout Ontario a requirement in the development of our future long-term energy plans—it will be put in the legislation.

To support an even more robust process, this legislation also ensures that supporting technical data are made public prior to the start of our next consultation phase. This would ensure everyone starts from the same appropriate technical level of understanding.

In addition, this legislation we are debating today also proposes an adjustment to transmission planning and procurement by providing the Independent Electricity System Operator with the ability to undertake competitive processes for transmitter selection or procurement when appropriate.

Competitive transmission procurement has only previously been done once before, through the Ontario Energy Board east-west tie designation. This is a very major transmission line that goes across northern Ontario, and very, very critical to the planning process that is in our long-term energy plan at the moment. Stakeholders and the Ontario Energy Board have agreed that the process run in 2012 was not as efficient as it should have been.

As we know, the IESO runs competitive procurement for energy generation projects with much success. We are proposing here to add transmission projects to their procurement processes. This measure is consistent, as well, with the recommendations of the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets.

Next, Mr. Speaker, as Ontario continues to implement its 2013 long-term energy plan, one of our key goals is energy conservation. Conservation helps families and businesses save money on their energy bills. It's as simple as that. It reduces the need to build expensive energy infrastructure, helping lessen the need for rate increases. And conservation reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, creating a cleaner future for our children and our grandchildren.

Ontario has already made great strides in building a culture of conservation. From 2005 to 2013, Ontarians conserved 8.7 terawatt hours of electricity, enough to power the cities of Mississauga and Oshawa in 2013. But there's more to do, Mr. Speaker, and this legislation takes additional steps.

Energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiatives for large buildings would require property owners to track their building's energy and water usage—as well as greenhouse gas emissions—over time, to determine how a building's energy performance is changing and how it compares to other, similar buildings. This ongoing review would help building owners identify opportunities to save energy and water, thereby saving money on their utility bills. It would also help tenants and buyers make informed property decisions, enabling property and financial markets to value energy- and water-efficient buildings, and it would help Ontario meet its conservation and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Ontario is already demonstrating leadership to energy reporting and benchmarking requirements for government and broader public sector buildings. This is already being done, and it's being done quite successfully. As we proceed, it will only be required of large buildings—several dozen large buildings across the province. Extending this requirement to large buildings would align our policy with jurisdictions across the United States, Europe, the United Kingdom and Asia. We're not breaking new ground; we're following best practices, and some of those best practices are already taking place.

The second initiative sets water efficiency standards for products that consume both energy and water, such as dishwashers and washing machines. Currently, manufacturers can supply the Ontario market with models that meet our energy-efficient requirements, but they consume more energy than they would if we also included water efficiency standards. So if these same appliances and the same equipment had not only energy efficiency in it, but also added the water efficiency component to it, you would almost double the conservation benefits from the equipment.

Other jurisdictions, including the province of British Columbia and the US Department of Energy, have already harmonized both energy and water efficiency standards for these types of products. Again, we're not breaking new ground here, we're following best practices. By harmonizing with the US standards, Ontario can streamline the process for manufacturers, save consumers money and show continued leadership in setting efficiency standards.

In conclusion—I won't go into conclusion right now, because I'm going to speak to some of the issues that my parliamentary assistant was going to speak to, but he is not here yet.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, you cannot refer to the gentleman in his absence.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try to demonstrate that the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has set a very, very good example of how to

ad lib through time in this House, because he is masterful at it, and I wish I could emulate him.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main points of this particular submission is to create a process in legislation for planning the electricity system. There was a process that was contemplated under the Electricity Act. I forget what year it was enacted. It was a process that would have delegated to the Ontario Energy Board a very, very significant planning process. It was very prescriptive in terms of the type of consultation that had to take place, the length of time. Previous governments initiated the process to incorporate the Electricity Act process into the system, and it bogged down on a number of occasions.

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From 2010 to 2013, we did an alternative because we did not have that incorporated in legislation. We proceeded with what we called the long-term energy plan, or LTEP. LTEP, as it was implemented in 2013, included very, very massive consultation across the province that went from February through to November. It included, I think, nine sessions with First Nation and Métis communities. It went across the province. It had special sessions for stakeholders where they could have an interrelationship with the leaders from IESO, OPA, and it was extremely broad.

When the long-term energy plan 2013 was issued—it was December 2013—it was about 85 pages long, and it covered all the key components of the electricity system. The final product received a lot of plaudits and thank yous from the people, the stakeholders, who had participated in the process. When we announced that process, there were endorsements that came to the end product to the ministry, to the IESO and to the Ontario Power Authority for the fact that we listened and it was effective. Part of the long-term energy plan at that point established and required regional energy plans to be implemented, and so the 2013 long-term energy plan is being implemented now by those regional energy plans being implemented, and in each one of the regional plans there is additional detailed consultation. They consult with municipalities because, up until now, energy planning took place, and community planning and community official plans took place and they never connected the dots; they weren't on the same page. At the same time, the level of engagement, of energy conservation, combined heat and power projects, in municipalities was very, very scattered. It was successfully implemented particularly in Guelph, a leader in Ontario in that regard. But many municipalities were not paying attention to it.

So the regional structure for energy planning is being implemented now. One of the first to be implemented, one that actually was included, the regional plan was included in the long-term energy plan of 2013, was northwestern Ontario. That was the plan that identified the east-west transmission line to be implemented. It was the one that identified something that is absolutely transformational, and that is the transmission line to Pickle Lake, which will then move northerly to bring power, grid power, to 21 remote First Nation commun-

ties. It's transformational. That hasn't taken place anywhere in Canada or in other northern provinces.

About a month ago in Thunder Bay, they had the Chiefs of Ontario session, and at that time they announced a transformational public-private partnership. Watay Power is 100% First Nation. That group of First Nations—there were 20 First Nations who joined together in a public-private partnership with private sector companies Fortis and RES to actually put together a billion-dollar-plus transmission project to bring power up to Pickle Lake and then into remote communities in northern Ontario.

They had First Nations in that room who were in tears that they were leading it. Watay Power: The First Nations were leading this initiative. They had been working over the last two years with the OPA, the IESO and the Ministry of Energy. Most importantly, they were working meticulously to get all of these individual First Nations onside for this public-private partnership, which was transformational in terms of moving forward.

So the regional planning context is very, very important. That's what was included in the long-term energy plan. It's that type of consultation and forward-looking planning that is incorporated in this legislation to ensure that we can plan for the future.

There are issues that have arisen concerning what will happen to planning. This legislation deals with planning, and it makes it very, very clear that cabinet and the IESO will have the responsibility and the authority to designate transmission projects—not only to designate them, but to have them on a competitive basis moving forward. So we're very, very pleased to see that moving forward in this particular legislation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll take it from here, Bob.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm hearing some chatter on the other side, and I didn't quite get the words. He is not speaking in his usual loud voice. I'm speaking about the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll take it from here.

Interjections.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think I've almost used up his time. For those in Nepean–Carleton, they should be aware that Lisa MacLeod is here at the start of the parliamentary proceedings, doing her work and paying attention, and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is doing his usual thing of trying to be interruptive.

The other issue that I wanted to address in terms of this legislation are the issues regarding the equipment and appliances having conservation both with respect to water and with respect to electricity. That's new in Ontario. It involved a lot of internal discussions and some external discussions with manufacturers and so forth. One of the issues there was whether it should be done by the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Energy, and we were able to resolve that issue successfully.

In terms of other planning issues, one of the significant elements that came out of the long-term energy plan

was the regional planning and the municipal planning that was relative to renewable energy. In that particular case, we did initiate consultations through the IESO and the OPA before they were merged, and that turned out to be quite successful. As you know, the outcome of that particular process is that municipalities now have a lot more input into the issues.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He's here.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I know one of the tardiest and most attentive members in this place is the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. He just attended, and I'm just contemplating—I was just given a copy of his speech and told, "Just read his speech." I thought maybe we would teach the member a lesson and I would read his speech, and then he would be able to listen to it to see whether he prepared a good speech or not. But, Mr. Speaker, I won't do that. I'll ask the member to address the issues now. Thank you.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the Minister of Energy for his promptness, for his on-the-spot dialogue.

I now turn the debate over to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I certainly thank the finest minister that I've ever had the privilege of working with for doing some excellent ragging of the puck, I gather.

I'm tempted to begin this morning with a discussion of traffic in Toronto after spending two most interesting hours-plus sitting in it—

Hon. Mario Sergio: We need more money for infrastructure.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yes, exactly. It sort of struck me as odd because the weather was perfect, the roads were dry, and it was just volume of traffic. But that's the subject for yet another discussion and a different act, and I can hardly wait. Of course, if I were to continue on this, my good friend and colleague across the away from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who loves to spar with me in debate, would say, "But he's not addressing the act."

I would like today to rise in support of the second reading of the proposed Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. If passed, this act would establish in law a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs. It would support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by empowering the Independent Electricity System Operator, which I'm going to refer to by its acronym, IESO, to competitively procure transmission projects, and it would introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole conserve energy and water to manage costs.

Speaker, the province recognizes that sound, prudent, long-term energy planning is essential to a clean, reliable and affordable energy future. The Ministry of Energy uses the development of long-term energy plans to conduct broad consultations with the public and with

stakeholders. It's a transparent process for establishing the government's key goals and priorities for the province's energy system.

In 2013, Ontario released the long-term energy plan for that year, the 2013 LTER—sometimes called LTER, but I'm going to call it the long-term energy plan—which balances five principles that guide all of the province's energy-related decisions. Those five principles are: cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community engagement and putting conservation first.

Since its release, the 2013 long-term energy plan has helped the province provide Ontarians with a clean, reliable and affordable supply of energy. Thousands of Ontarians participated in the consultation process for the 2013 long-term energy plan and helped us in our ministry and the many people who helped put the 2013 long-term energy plan together to develop the plan's strategies and targets to build a clean, modern and reliable energy future here in Ontario.

For the past two years, our ministry has been rolling out a variety of initiatives under the plan, and it will continue to guide our efforts. The overarching theme throughout the 2013 long-term energy plan and the guiding principle of the plan is Ontario's commitment to put conservation first. Conservation is the cleanest and most effective energy resource that we have. It offers consumers a way to reduce their energy bills.

A significant aspect of the conservation framework that guides the 2013 long-term energy plan is cost-effectiveness. We know that savings are important to Ontarians. Because the cost of electricity is rising everywhere in the world and we know that residential, commercial and industrial consumers are concerned about rates, the province is determined to find efficiencies that will assist homeowners and business owners to keep electricity costs down. This is a key priority.

From 2015 to 2032 inclusive, the forecast for residential bills indicates an average annual increase of about 2.2%, which is in line with neighbouring jurisdictions. The average annual increase in consumers' costs is generally in line with expected inflation, which averaged about 1.8% over the past 10 years.

To assist consumers to continue to see cost-savings and to manage electricity prices, the province has put initiatives in place, including Ontario's five-point small business energy savings plan, which is helping small businesses conserve energy, manage costs and save money. The government has always stood up for consumers and continues to be committed to putting consumers first.

This proposed legislation would, if passed, support two more guiding principles of the 2013 long-term energy plan: clean energy and reliability.

The Ministry of Energy will continuously monitor and support the development of more advanced and efficient ways to generate and to transmit electricity. In terms of supply, it's important to note that Ontario's precedent-setting closure of coal-fired generation in 2014 has earned Ontario's energy system recognition around the world. In fact, Ontario's electricity system is now 99.7%

free of carbon emissions. Of the emitters of greenhouse gases, Ontario's power generation system is no longer even among the top sources. Replacing coal-fired electricity generation was the single largest climate-change initiative undertaken in North America and was the equivalent of taking some 7 million cars off the road in Ontario.

Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America with a significant reliance on coal to eliminate coal as a source of electricity production. It's something that the utilities in the United States are only now stepping up to address. It's a challenge that Ontario addressed 10 years ago and set about in an organized systematic way, and in so doing has given Ontarians the cleanest electricity generation system anywhere in North America. It's a tremendous achievement.

The beauty of Ontario's energy system is that we rely on a variety of generation sources, using the right source in the right way at the right time for the right reasons. The workhorse of our system here in Ontario has always been our nuclear power fleet. It's reliable, it's clean, it's cost-effective and it's a key contributor to Ontario's technological development and, of course, to job creation right here in the province of Ontario.

Ontario is a pioneer in the generation of electricity through nuclear power. Ontario has been operating nuclear power safely and successfully for more than 40 years. It began with the launch of Ontario's first full-scale commercial nuclear power. That unit, called Douglas Point, came online in the 1960s and was only decommissioned not all that long ago.

Since the first reactors in Ontario began generating electricity, Ontario has benefitted from emissions-free, safe, reliable and affordable nuclear power. The Pickering generating station came online with Pickering 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the late 1960s, then Pickering 5 to 8 in the 1970s, at about the same time as construction on the Bruce nuclear power development began, with Bruce A and Bruce B coming on stream in the 1970s and the 1980s. Darlington was first conceived in the 1970s, and the last unit of Darlington came on stream in the 1990s.

The story of nuclear power in Canada is one of constant innovation and refurbishment. Ontario will ensure that this track record continues. Today, nuclear power provides about half of Ontario's electricity.

Renewable energy is playing a key part in our efforts to make the energy system cleaner and more sustainable. Renewable energy represents an important piece of Ontario's supply mix. The 2013 long-term energy plan includes targets for renewable energy: some 10,700 megawatts for wind and bioenergy to be online by 2021, and some 9,300 megawatts of additional hydroelectricity to be online in about 2025.

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Ontario currently has more than 14,800 megawatts of wind, solar, bioenergy and hydroelectricity energy online. There are more than 3,600 megawatts of wind power currently online. That's enough electricity to power nearly a million homes each year in the province of Ontario. As well, approximately 2,100 megawatts of

contracted wind capacity is yet to come online. In just 10 years, Ontario has become a North American leader in the development, use and manufacturing of clean energy. We have the fastest-growing clean tech sector in the country, and that's something that Ontarians should be proud of.

In looking at some of the states in the United States, you have to ask yourself: What are our neighbours doing? In what direction is Texas going? Texas is pursuing wind power. California is pursuing wind power. The mid-western states are pursuing wind power. Ontario was there first.

One of the advantages to Ontario's wind power was explained to me during the summer when I paid a visit to the Independent Electricity System Operator. One of the things that the technicians in the control room told me is that one of the challenges for electricity is that at any given moment, supply has to exactly equal demand, because for all practical purposes, electricity is not a commodity that can be stored. They said one of the things that turned out to be a wonderful asset in Ontario's adoption of wind power—but one that at the outset of the Green Energy Act was not foreseen—was the ability to take some of the wind farms and to adjust the pitch of the blades so that the energy coming out of wind farms could exactly follow the rise and fall of the peaks during the day or even during the season. It meant that other dispatchable sources of power either didn't need to be brought online if they weren't needed, or didn't need to be brought offline. You could very finely tune the supply and demand for electrical power right at the IESO headquarters—which, by the way, are in Mississauga—by adjusting the pitch of the blades on wind turbines.

I thought: How interesting that here we have a technology that's enabling Ontario to meet the challenge of those differences in the demand for electricity at various hours during the day. It just gives you an idea of the flexibility that we have here in the province with our diversified sources of power generation.

Speaker, community engagement is another key pillar of Ontario's 2013 long-term energy plan. In this province, we make it a key priority to encourage municipalities and aboriginal communities to develop their own community-level energy plans. These plans set out infrastructure priorities and identify conservation and renewable opportunities tailored to local needs.

This province is committed to giving municipalities meaningful opportunities to participate when decisions are being made about siting renewable energy projects. It means that Ontario is constantly working with our partner ministries and agencies to ensure that First Nation and Métis communities are consulted on any energy activity that could affect their aboriginal or treaty rights.

The implementation of the 2013 long-term energy plan is helping the province make great strides in meeting each of our objectives to provide Ontarians with a clean, reliable and affordable supply of energy.

Among the other things, Speaker, we have some real centres of excellence here where some of our regions or

municipalities have really stepped up and approached some of the challenges of how they're going to generate energy locally. So I'm going to do a little shout-out to some of the best ones.

Oxford county is one area that has set out to become autonomous in the way that it generates and uses energy. I can see my colleague over here, the MPP from Oxford. I was in Woodstock not that long ago talking with the mayor and talking with Woodstock Hydro. They're a great example of how to set out to do a plan to approach their energy future by looking ahead and calculating how much energy the region is going to use, where it's going to come from and what mix it's going to be.

Another would be Guelph. Guelph has long been a leader in approaching how Guelph and the surrounding area use energy and where their energy comes from.

Today, our government is proposing legislation that would provide a statutory basis for a long-term energy planning process that builds on the 2013 long-term energy plan and that is designed to balance the principles of cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community and aboriginal engagement, and emphasis on conservation and demand management.

The proposed legislation would ensure a consistent long-term planning process is followed. As well, it would support Ontario's Open Government Initiative by making consultation with the public, stakeholders and aboriginal groups throughout Ontario a requirement in the development of energy plans, and it would ensure that energy plans and their supporting technical data are made public. These are our existing practices, but never before have they been enshrined in legislation.

The proposed legislation would also improve transmission planning and procurement by providing the Independent Electricity System Operator with the ability to undertake competitive processes for transmitter selection or procurement when those actions are appropriate. These competitive approaches will ensure that ratepayers get the greatest value and that the Independent Electricity System Operator is well positioned to undertake these selection or procurement processes.

And there's more: The proposed legislation would also advance energy conservation. As Ontario implements its 2013 long-term energy plan, one of the key goals of that plan is energy conservation. Conservation helps families and businesses save money on their energy bills. Conservation reduces the need to build expensive energy infrastructure, and conservation helps to lessen the need for rate increases. Conservation reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Conservation creates a cleaner future for our children and for our grandchildren. Conservation is the cleanest and most cost-effective energy resource that Ontario has. Conservation offers consumers a way to reduce their energy bills. Conservation reduces the need, as I mentioned before, to build new generation as well as new transmission and distribution infrastructure. Conservation makes the best use of what we already have and the most optimal use of what it is that the province is building at any one moment.

The more we save, the less we need to look for new supply, and so Ontario's aim is to consider conservation as the first option before building new generation or transmission facilities wherever such a measure is cost-effective. That means adopting a conservation-first mindset throughout Ontario's planning, approval and procurement processes. It means bringing that mindset to work with Ontario's agencies, with local distributors and with the other ministries with which the Ministry of Energy partners. And, of course, it means building a climate of conservation and a culture of conservation here in Ontario.

As we plan our energy needs for the next 20 years, conservation will be the first resource Ontario considers before building new generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. The Ministry of Energy is providing leadership in implementing conservation first by setting energy conservation policy and establishing energy efficiency standards.

Ontario has already made great strides in building a culture of conservation. From 2005 to 2013, Ontarians conserved some 8.7 terawatt hours of electricity. To put that in perspective, that's enough to power the cities of Mississauga and Oshawa throughout an entire calendar year.

As always, as things continue to evolve in a fast-growing place like Ontario, the legislation that the province is introducing today takes additional steps, and it introduces two new initiatives. There's more to do. The energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings would require building owners to track and report their energy and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions to the Ministry of Energy, and potentially develop and publish energy conservation and demand management plans. This is something that many building owners are already doing. In fact, the best of the building owners are discovering that not only is it a particularly good idea, but as a not-bad-at-all plan it's something that all other building owners should adopt as well. The initiative would help building owners identify opportunities to save energy and water, thereby saving money on their utility bills. It would help tenants and buyers make informed property decisions enabling property and financial markets to value energy- and water-efficient buildings, and it would help Ontario meet its conservation and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

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Speaker, Ontario is already demonstrating leadership through energy reporting and benchmarking requirements for government and broader public sector buildings. Extending this requirement to large buildings would align Ontario's policy with jurisdictions across the United States, in Europe, in the United Kingdom and in Asia.

The second initiative sets water efficiency standards for products that consume both energy and water, and the most common in most homes would be your dishwasher or your washing machine. Currently, manufacturers can supply the Ontario market with models that meet our energy efficiency requirements but which consume more

energy than they would if we also included water-efficiency standards. To this end, other jurisdictions, including the province of British Columbia and, most importantly, the US Department of Energy, regulate both energy and water efficiency standards for these products. By harmonizing with the US standards for these products, Ontario can streamline the process for manufacturers, save consumers money, and show continued leadership in setting efficiency standards.

Speaker, to make smart decisions, you've got to have the best information. If passed, the new legislation would help Ontarians make smart decisions about the products that we use and the places that we live and work, and it would enshrine an inclusive, transparent and efficient planning process, ensuring we have the best information in planning for Ontario's energy future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today in debate for Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. I applaud the minister, actually, for continuing on after he had indicated that he would be splitting his time, because I know he spoke a bit longer than he was prepared to.

In any event, Speaker, I think I speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus when I say that whenever an energy bill comes before this Legislature, it causes us a great deal of concern. After all, this is a government that has brought in the largest single hydro increase in Ontario's history. This is a government that brought in the Green Energy Act, which has destroyed much of rural Ontario and has increased our hydro rates. This is a government that cancelled two gas plants, to the tune of \$1 billion, in order to win an election. It wasn't based on sound planning, so when I hear the government talk about the long-term energy plan, when I hear them talking about the Green Energy Act and wind turbine developments, when I hear them talking about IESO, and when I hear them talking about the sale of Hydro One, I get concerned.

Just like clockwork, on Saturday evening and early Sunday morning, our time shifted backward and our hydro bills, yet again, went up in the province of Ontario.

As a former energy critic and somebody who's been very concerned about energy prices in the province of Ontario for quite some time, I urge caution whenever we look at a piece of legislation put forward by the Liberal government with respect to energy. I will be respectful of the government's time. I will be respectful of the fact that they have a bill before the assembly, but I will raise red flags because what they have done in the past is likely what they will do again in the future. That causes me concern for the good people of Nepean-Carleton and the city of Ottawa who have consistently sent me to this place to defend them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, when we're speaking about energy in this province, like my colleague

just talked about, we need to look at what this province has done when it comes to energy.

One of the most troubling decisions, probably in the history of our province, is the fact that this government, when it comes to the energy file, is selling off our public hydro system. It would be one thing if they can substantiate this sale by saying, "Listen, by selling it we're going to raise enough funds that will actually pay for infrastructure." The reality, independently confirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer, is this: Selling Hydro One will actually put us further into debt. So how can there be a claim that by selling this asset, they will be able raise funds to build infrastructure, when the reality is this is going to put us further into debt? This will put us into a worse financial position. And this isn't my opinion, Mr. Speaker; this is the opinion of an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly. This officer stated very clearly—just looking at the facts, not affiliated with any party; looking at the facts of this sale—that it will put our province in a worse financial position.

Now, how can the government possibly stand up in this House and claim that they're selling this asset to build infrastructure when the reality is that it puts us in a worse financial position? In fact, they're making it harder to build infrastructure by selling this asset. The reality is that this makes it more difficult to actually invest in our province, by selling this asset. The reality is that it does nothing to benefit Ontarians.

Who knows what the real reason is? Who knows what the real benefit is? But it's certainly not to build infrastructure, which we so dearly, dearly need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, Mr. Speaker, like yourself, I listened attentively to the Minister of Energy and the parliamentary assistant the member from Mississauga-Streetsville. As you know, they are charged with a very important file that affects everybody in Ontario. With this legislation they're trying to ensure that, going forward, there are more efficiencies and more conservation measures. That's the core of this bill, Bill 135.

The interesting new analysis here is the connecting of water usage with power usage. We sometimes don't make that connection. Whether it's in your home or whether it's in your workplace, especially in large workplaces, water consumption is directly correlated with your energy consumption. So it's an attempt, in this legislation, to try to measure that in order to bring about more conservation.

If you look at the city of Toronto at night—I'm sure Chatham is the same way—you'll see that all the lights in the big buildings seem to be on. You wonder, "Why do all the buildings have to be lit up all night long when there's nobody in them? What's the cost of that? Do these big office towers measure that?" That's one of the things that is in this legislation, which I think is very important: to try to measure this energy usage and consumption so there would be some kind of benchmark so you can find best practices in how to reduce energy

consumption—because these big users, like the buildings that are in all our major cities and our industrial partners, have to start to measure and try to find out ways of conserving power.

This is what this bill tries to encourage, and that's why I think it's a bill worth supporting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the record regarding Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

I felt sorry for the government today. They really had a challenge giving their lead today, so part of me felt bad for the minister and the parliamentary assistant because any time they stand up and have to defend their energy policy, they do always appear to be on shaky ground. I share some of the same concerns that my colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton put on the record.

We just faced a hydro rate increase on November 1 because of this government's damaging energy policy. I do get worried when this government talks about energy policies that also include water consumption. This is a government that—when we had issues with billing and metering in rural areas, we went to the Ministry of Energy for answers and they shut the door. We had to bring in the Ombudsman to get those answers for our constituents.

So when we talk about water conservation, I'm just a little worried. I have a rural riding. I hope that this government isn't going down the road of metering wells, because I think they're going to have big, big opposition from ridings like Leeds–Grenville and all over the province of Ontario. I think they need to come clean with their energy policy. I think we've had a situation where we've asked for answers and they shut the door on us. We've got issues in this House almost every day with the sale of Hydro One. There is tremendous opposition in this province; 185 municipalities have stood firmly against this government's plan.

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In fact, even the Minister of Energy, when he was the mayor of Ottawa, stood vehemently opposed to the sale of Hydro One. That is the Bob Chiarelli we want to hear from today, not the minister that we heard from this morning. Come clean, minister. We want to hear from you again. Don't meter wells. Don't continue this disastrous energy policy in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the government side, to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for final comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, thank you very much, Coach—I mean, Speaker. I thank the members from Nepean–Carleton, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Eglinton–Lawrence and Leeds–Grenville for their comments—some helpful; others less so.

The Green Energy Act, as I explained in my remarks, has helped Ontario contain costs and more efficiently manage energy supply and demand. Here is what Ontario's decision to move to green energy has done in

the last decade: Ontario has tomorrow's generation assets at yesterday's prices, procured with near-zero interest rates. Looking south of the border, the United States is scrambling to catch up to the province of Ontario by shutting down their coal plants and buying the energy assets they need today at tomorrow's prices, with interest rates that Americans cannot predict.

Ontario is not going to choose the conservative, retrograde option. We have to remind them that the 20th century is indeed over. In this century, Ontario is going to generate power cleanly and economically, while doing our part to lower greenhouse gases. Now, if one looks south of the border at other electrical utilities around us, we can see that Duke Energy is increasing its power rates. The many northeastern and Midwestern utilities are shutting down their coal-fired plants, as Ontario did a decade ago, and their power rates are going up. Austin Energy in Texas is raising its power rates. California's dozens of electrical utilities are all moving to renewable energy, shutting down coal, and their power rates are climbing.

We appreciate that power should be delivered as efficiently and economically as possible, and that is exactly what this bill and the long-term energy plan have allowed us to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much for allowing me to join the debate on Bill 135 today. I really did appreciate the minister coming in and pinch-hitting for the parliamentary assistant as well as doing his own job this morning. It's always challenging when someone is caught up in gridlock that is primarily caused by themselves. However, that is a story for another day, because of course we can talk about the fact that the Liberal government has done nothing to relieve gridlock in this province in the 12 years that they have been in power—absolutely nothing.

But there is so much to talk about and so little time. I'm looking at the clock and I really only have 20 minutes to speak today, whereas I should have an hour. Is it possible for us to delay question period and allow me to have the whole hour, all in one piece? Apparently not, no. According to the standing orders, I'll have to wait and come back another day.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What if we just ring the bells?

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's always helpful if you can speak all at the same time.

But I am very nervous whenever this government brings out a new bill to deal with the energy sector. I think I have a right to be, and the people across Ontario share my view and my concern, because every time this government uses the word "energy," it seems that it costs us more and more.

I chuckle—but of course I didn't heckle, because I don't really do that on a regular basis. The parliamentary assistant spoke about how the Green Energy Act has helped to lower the cost of electricity—I'm paraphrasing

here. His implication was that it's been a good financial thing for the people of Ontario. Well, Speaker, you know and I know and he knows that nothing could be further from the facts. In fact, the primary driver of increased energy costs in this province is the Green Energy Act, and everybody who has done an independent analysis will share that view.

As a result of the Green Energy Act, we have what used to be called the provincial benefit, but it became quite a joke. It is now called the global adjustment. "Global adjustment" sounds like something that came from the Klingon universe or something. It's the global adjustment. I'll tell you what it does mean: It means that you're paying a lot more for your hydro bills here in the province of Ontario.

The global adjustment, as auditor Bonnie Lysyk has determined in her report, will have cost Ontarians \$50 billion by the end of this year. That's not million; that's billion. Take a million and add three more zeros; \$50 billion is what the global adjustment will have cost you by the end of 2015, and that is largely as a result of the changes made by the passing of the Green Energy Act in 2009.

I want to talk about this bill itself, but I see that, based on what the minister spoke about and what the parliamentary assistant spoke about, the discussion is somewhat wide open here today. I appreciate that because it gives us an opportunity to talk about—I know we do not question the motives of a member of this assembly, so I'm not doing that, but I think it is fair to question the motives of a government.

It seems that, as they say, timing is everything. Just ask the Kansas City Royals. It seems that the introduction of this bill coincided very closely with the Financial Accountability Officer releasing his report on the financial impact of the partial sale of Hydro One. I think something that was made abundantly clear in the FAO's, Mr. LeClair's, report—I have some facts and quotes here—is that he believes it's a bad deal for the people of Ontario. He also makes it clear that this Liberal government is anything but open and transparent.

The reason he says it's a bad deal is because—and he sees the politics. He's not political; he's completely neutral when it comes to politics, but he sees what the government is doing here. With this tranche that will begin on Thursday, 15% of Hydro One will be sold. I know that my people here in the PC Party, the official opposition, and my colleagues in the third party are going to consider that a very bad, dark day for the people of the province of Ontario because once the cat is out of the bag, it's going to be very hard to reverse it. As they say, you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube.

On Thursday, it's going to be a difficult day for the people of Ontario because they know that this government will have then crossed the line. There's always the opportunity to say, "We've made a mistake." We thought that just maybe, when the FAO released his report last week, this government would take notice and say, "At the very least, we have to pause this. We have to sit back and

say, ‘Is this the right thing to do or is it maybe time for us to take a second look at it?’” I think that would have been a very, very reasonable approach to take.

The Financial Accountability Officer’s job is to analyze how decisions made by the government will impact the finances of that province. What he pointed out in his report was that there’s going to be a bump in the revenue of the province in the first year. Isn’t that kind of convenient? A government that’s talking about—as the finance minister repeats over and over and over again, “We’ve met every one of our goals, and we’ve met every one of our projections as far as reducing the province’s debt and deficit.”

1000

First of all, when you set them low enough, it’s not hard to get to. But isn’t that going to be convenient next year when the budget comes out and the finance minister is going to—and you know what? The Premier may even take that crowning opportunity on herself. She might say, “We have reduced the deficit for 2016-17 by X number of dollars.” Really, it’s going to be in the billions; we know that. This is a valuable asset that they’ve put up for a fire sale. It is not some used car that your grandmother had that’s been sitting in the barn for five years. No. This is Hydro One. This is the caretaker of all the transmission in this province. This is the central nervous system of the electricity system in the province. This is what they’re selling off, and 15% of that is going to bring in a lot of money.

So next year, it’s going to be, “Look at us. You see, we’ve exceeded our deficit projections. We’ve exceeded our goal once again. Come and pat us on the back, because we’ve done so much of it we’ve dislocated our shoulders.” That’s going to be the story next year. I’m telling you in advance, watch next spring. That’s going to be the story by the Minister of Finance and the Premier.

But there’s a sad ending to the story. The FAO said it’s going to be good news next year, but as we go down the road, the news is going to get worse and worse. This government knows that its days—they’ve done such a terrible job that even Justin Trudeau may not be able to save them in 2018. So here we go. As a result of this deal, they’re going to see the deterioration of the finances of the province get progressively greater; the deterioration gets greater as we move along.

The FAO says a nice, positive bump in year 1, but in subsequent years, we’re going to find that the decision to sell off this crown asset is going to hurt, and that will be reflected in the finances of this province. Our revenues are going to be damaged because the annual revenues from Hydro One’s operations won’t be there anymore. We’re going to lose that. We’re relinquishing our right to have that because it won’t be in public hands anymore. That’s the financial side of it.

We also have concerns about who controls the transmission in this province. My cousin Sean Conway, who was also my predecessor here in this House, came from the other party. Sean was a member of the Liberal Party, and I am not. Let’s just leave it at that. Sean was the one,

I believe, who called it the central nervous system of the province. He decried toying with the idea of selling Hydro One in the previous government, as did the member from St. Catharines, the minister without portfolio, Mr. Bradley, as did Dalton McGuinty, the former Premier. I can name minister after minister in this government, but certainly members of the party, when they were in opposition, said that it is just the wrong idea to sell that crown corporation.

I’m just going to talk about the money at this point, too. It’s the wrong idea; we’ve established that. This government doesn’t want to back down on it because it is so desperate. It is so desperate to give the people some good news on the financial side of things next year, because they’ve been going on and on and on and on about “net zero.” This is the new phrase when they’re negotiating contracts: “net zero.” Can anybody out there actually tell us what it takes to achieve net zero? It must be some kind of a dream in a fantasy movie or science fiction, that net zero, because every time you turn around, there’s a settlement. And the ministers crow about how hard they worked and how their partners and they worked to get this settlement. The increases are this much in the first year—a lump-sum bonus for signing, this much in the first year, this much in the second year and this much in the third year—but it all adds up to zero. It’s kind of consistent with the math of this government. They really have trouble with numbers.

Moving to the increase in hydro rates, what about the numbers that we get in the hydro rate increase? The OEB puts out a press release and the government just parrots it. In fact, I suspect that the government pretty much writes the release. The government parrots it and it gets portrayed in the media as being gospel.

Here is the trouble I have with the math. The off-peak rate for electricity was eight cents a kilowatt hour. It went to 8.3 cents a kilowatt hour. That’s an increase of about 3.5%. The mid-peak went from 12.2 cents a kilowatt hour to 12.8 cents a kilowatt hour. That’s about a 5% increase. The on-peak rate went from 16.1 cents a kilowatt hour to 17.5 cents a kilowatt hour. That’s just under a 9% increase. The government’s math is, if you take 9% and 5% and, we’ll just say for the sake of argument, 3%, so 9% and 5% and 3% is about 17%. If you divide that by three, apparently it makes 3.4%. I’m just helping you guys out.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Michael. I have to keep moving otherwise my feet might get stuck to the floor.

You take 17% and divide it by three and in the Liberal world of math, that’s 3.4%. I have a problem with that, because you take 17% and divide it by three, it’s almost 6%. But in the Liberal world it’s 3.4%. They’ve been saying the increase in your hydro rates is about 3.4%. No matter how you divide it—if every kilowatt hour you used was off-peak, you might be able to achieve that goal.

I would ask those people out in television land to examine their hydro bills. I want to be inundated with the

thousands and thousands of emails from every one of you who is going to say, "Oh, Mr. Yakabuski, every one of my kilowatt hours was off-peak." I'll be awaiting the emails. I'll look for the relatives of Liberals to be sending that email in. That's the only one I'm going to get because it doesn't exist. In reality, it doesn't exist. It's not feasible. But this is the kind of math we get from Liberals. That's what we're getting with the FAO report and that's what we got with the hydro increases: 17% divided by three now equals 3.4%. I better have a talk with the education minister.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's probably busy these days adding up the cost of pizza.

More directly now to Bill 135: I have to set the background a little bit for it to be easier to understand why I'm concerned about this bill. What you have seen in the background is a government that is determined—determined—to put a picture on every piece of legislation and to make sure that their hands are on it.

1010

One of the big concerns about this bill—the minister mentioned the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, frequently in his address and how they are increasing the role of the IESO. But in fact, the bill says:

"At least once during each period prescribed by the regulations, the minister shall, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council"—that's the cabinet—"issue a long-term energy plan setting out and balancing the government of Ontario's goals and objectives respecting energy for the period specified by the plan...."

"The minister shall, before issuing a long-term energy plan under subsection (1), require the IESO"—that's the Independent Electricity System Operator—"to submit a technical report on the adequacy and reliability of electricity resources with respect to anticipated electricity supply, capacity, storage, reliability and demand and on any other related matters the minister may specify...."

So it's not the IESO that's going to write the LTERP, the long-term energy plan; it's going to be the minister. He is going to call the IESO and say, "I'd like your input as to the adequacy of supply and the blah blah blah, but I'm the one who's going to write the plan. It's going to be mine. We really only need you in an advisory capacity."

When the IESO was first brought into being—it was the IMO at that time—it was supposed to take the politics out of it and allow the technocrats to help design the energy plans for the province of Ontario. But they have taken this electricity system and completely politicized it. Contrary to what the government and the minister imply—that the IESO is going to have a greater role—the IESO is going to have a lesser role, and the politicos are going to have more to say about running our electricity system.

I'd ask the people of Ontario, if the politicos are running our electricity system as they have under this gang, how are we doing so far? We've got a province

where electricity was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour in 2003; it now peaks at 17.5 cents a kilowatt hour.

Now we are going to have the politicians take greater control of the long-term energy plan. Speaker, as Danny Labine once said to me, this is not good. Wow.

We pay a lot of money.

They amalgamated the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, which this government created, and then they realized it was nothing but a political smokescreen for them, and they were getting caught on it, so they amalgamated it into the IESO. But now what they're doing is taking away all of the relative usefulness of the IESO. Is the government saying that they do not trust the Independent Electricity System Operator? Is that what we're hearing in this House today, that the government doesn't trust its own agency? We know they don't like the Financial Accountability Officer because he didn't tell the people what the government wanted the people to hear.

I'm running out of time, so I'm going to have to cut this in two. I will be back, Speaker, at another time to inform the people of Ontario in a bigger way about what's happening in this province as a result of the negligence of this government.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the members for an interesting and lively debate this morning and for the warning from the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke that he will be back.

It is now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome the friends and relatives of page captain Abby Moreside. In the gallery today are her parents, Kathy and Dave Moreside, and her former teacher, Karen Miller. Thank you all for coming to Queen's Park and wishing Abby well today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Page captain Cameron Rodzik is a St. Pius X grade 8 student in my riding. His mom and dad are here today: Amber and Donald Rodzik Jr. His brothers Christopher and Hudson Rodzik are here, as well as four grandparents: Donald Rodzik Sr. and his wife, Gail; and Joanna Staudt and her husband, Helmut. Thank you all for coming to Queen's Park this morning.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome some guests who were here this morning to speak about autism. We have Katharine Buchan from Autism Ontario; Kara Onofrio of Autism's Angels; and Linda DiMambro, Tony DiMambro, and their son Anthony DiMambro. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Unfortunately, my guests aren't here yet, but I have the students from Neil McNeil high school, which isn't quite in my riding; it is in Scarborough Southwest. Chrissy Orr and her students—grade 10

civics class. I'll welcome them maybe later when they get in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you won't.

Further introductions.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de présenter M. Alain Dupuis, qui est le président du RÉFO; M. Denis Vaillancourt, le président de l'AFO; ainsi que des représentants de la FESFO, Jérémie Spadafora et Rym Ben Berrah, qui sont ici à Queen's Park. Ils ne sont pas tout à fait arrivés, mais je ne voulais pas manquer l'opportunité de leur souhaiter la bienvenue. Ils viennent nous parler de l'université francophone.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome a former broadcast colleague of mine, David Foot, from Peterborough.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2014-15 annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Hydro One generates over \$700 million a year for this province. That's a lot of money flowing into provincial coffers. The FAO has confirmed that the Hydro One fire sale will see that money dry up. It's a one-time payout with long-term negative consequences.

Everyone in Ontario will pay for this bad deal. Will the Acting Premier tell the people of Ontario which taxes she will raise or what services she will cut?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must say, I find the selective reading from the Leader of the Opposition to be quite remarkable. Nobody is suggesting that revenue will dry up. We are retaining a minimum of a 40% share. We will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will continue to receive revenues from Hydro One, unlike—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, how much?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —unlike the deal to sell off the 407 that your party knows intimately. We will continue to receive revenue from Hydro One. We also did ask the assets council to look at other ways to generate revenue. We are, in fact, going to be raising \$100 million a year from increased taxes on beer, for example, so we are looking at—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier, and back to the present day. The government is very good at blaming things that were done in past decades. The reality of this is a bad deal for Ontario today. Don't try to justify your actions by blaming things that happened in the distant past.

According to a poll done by the Ontario Energy Association, almost 80% of Ontario residents believe the fire sale will raise their hydro bills. When you combine rising hydro bills with the inevitable tax increases this government will impose to make up for the revenue lost from Hydro One, the people of Ontario will suffer a double hit.

Mr. Speaker, does the Acting Premier really believe the people of Ontario deserve to be punished twice for this government's incompetence and mismanagement?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that we go back and ask ourselves why, in fact, government made the decision to broaden the ownership of Hydro One. The reality is that we have a big infrastructure deficit in this province. We simply must invest in infrastructure, because the lack of infrastructure has a significant negative impact on our productivity. This is all about enhancing our productivity, Speaker. We are committed to building infrastructure. We have to pay to build that infrastructure.

One of the things that we're doing is broadening the ownership of Hydro One, but it's not the only thing that we are doing. We have sold the GM shares, we are looking at our real estate holdings and we are looking at other assets, because we need to get the revenue to pay for the much-needed infrastructure. We need to do that now, not down the road, so we are making those investments, because the people of Ontario need those investments in infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier. This tired response, that this is for infrastructure—no one buys it. Your infrastructure budget for the 10 years is \$130 billion, pre-sale. Post-sale, it's \$130 billion. There's not one cent more for infrastructure. The FAO can show us exactly how much money will be lost. You're losing revenue for infrastructure.

This government's past record of fiscal mismanagement tells us that with the revenue lost from Hydro One, Ontario will spiral down a path of financial crisis. There are only two ways to replace the \$700 million that you're going to lose in revenue. It's either new taxes or cutting services.

Why won't the minister tell us which taxes they will raise or what services they will cut? Are we going to see more cuts to doctors? Are we going to see cuts in infrastructure? Tell us what you're going to cut.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, one thing I can guarantee you, Speaker, is that we are not going to be cutting 100,000 jobs, which is the platform of that party opposite. I also urge the Leader of the Opposition to actually read the report of the FAO, and when—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Let's keep it that way, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the Leader of the Opposition owes it to the public to actually present a more balanced view, but I don't think he's going to be doing that, so let me do that. Let me quote page 9 of the report: "This report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One." Also: "The results of this analysis are sensitive to the timing of subsequent sales.... These forecasts are subject to changes in the financial performance of Hydro One."

Speaker, the people of Ontario deserve—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, since the Acting Premier won't acknowledge what taxes are going to be raised or what services will be cut, let me try with the Minister of Energy.

1040

Let me read you a quote from the editorial board of your Ottawa Citizen. "It's hard to see the benefits of the Ontario Liberals' decision to" sell "Hydro One ... now that we've seen the provincial Financial Accountability Officer's assessment of the proposed sell-off." It goes on to note, "The report also points out it would have been cheaper just to borrow the money."

The minister didn't see the benefits of the Hydro One fire sale when he was mayor of Ottawa; the minister must admit he doesn't see them today. Everyone in Ottawa is saying this is a bad deal for Ontario. Will you finally acknowledge it's a bad deal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I want to say that I think the Ottawa Citizen endorsed my opponent in all of the 10 elections that I ran in, and I was able to overcome that.

But what's important is to give some reality to the report from the accountability officer. Again, I want to say, reading from the report, this report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One. What's more important, it does not seek to assess the prospects for performance improvements at Hydro One that might result from the partial sale or any future changes at Hydro One. The report does not seek to assess the financial impact of any government spending that may be financed from the sale of Hydro One.

These are very important omissions and I will refer to them in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: The same editorial goes on to say—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Patrick Brown: —"the Liberals' argument seems to amount to 'we really, really want the money right now and hopefully something good will happen down the line.'"

The minister doesn't have a crystal ball to show him the future, but the FAO has laid out the facts very clearly. He showed that this is a bad deal for the province.

Why won't the minister come clean to his constituents and stand up against this bad deal? One hundred and eighty-five municipalities are saying this is a bad deal for Ontario. Will he come clean and admit this deal is just about temporarily cooking the books for the province to look better for the next election? This isn't a good deal for the province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

While I'm standing, I'm going to remind all members that the dignified way to acknowledge members in this House is by using their title or their riding. I'm getting a little more frustrated with the barbs that are coming out from either side, lowering the tone of debate.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm up to the challenge of the battle of the newspapers. In the Toronto Star today there was a very, very insightful article that pointed out that in the report, they set out a number of scenarios, possible scenarios. A number of those scenarios show that it's a very positive result for the province of Ontario. We don't hear that.

Given that there are a number of scenarios that actually are included, some of which are positive, I think it's important to give context to the statement that says, "This report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One."

We believe that what is not included in here, and what's referred to here as not being included, is the economic assessment of those investments and the better production that will come from Hydro One.

We're confident this is the right decision. It provides infrastructure; it provides it now and over the next 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: No one buys this argument that it's for infrastructure. The infrastructure budget doesn't change. You're losing revenue. That's why the editorial has been so critical.

I'll continue. The editorial reads there are "voters who are sick and tired of big-ticket, bad-outcome projects," something the Liberal Party has become famous for. The Citizen mentions cancelling gas plants, investing in

money pits like MaRS and throwing cash around at teachers' unions.

The editorial concludes that this fire sale "looks like yet another bad fiscal decision from a provincial government with a well-earned reputation for making them."

Will the minister continue to defend the sale in the face of all evidence that suggests the contrary? Do the right thing: Listen to your constituents, listen to municipalities. Stand up to this government, stand up to your Premier and say, "Don't sell out Ottawa."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite makes it sound as though—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite makes it sound as though 100% of this crown corporation is being sold, and that's not the case. We are in fact broadening ownership; the first tranche is 15%. Of that amount, we are going to be credited with a deferred tax benefit of \$2.6 billion. We are going to receive enough money to reduce debt substantively, which also reduces cost. We are going to receive a substantive amount of capital that's going to be able to be reinvested into projects to earn more opportunity.

The question the member opposite is asking is, can the forgone revenue be replaced over a period time? Of course it's going to be replaced. Unlike what they did when they sold the 407 and gave us nothing in return, we are reinvesting, we are going to get—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —we continue to own the company—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier told Ontarians that she'd lead the most open and transparent government in Canada. Instead, we see the Liberal government tearing a page from Stephen Harper's playbook by stonewalling independent watchdogs and trying to discredit them when they speak up. We've seen it with the Auditor General, we've seen it with the Ombudsman, and now we're seeing it with the Financial Accountability Officer.

Why is this Liberal government trying to discredit the Financial Accountability Officer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to make it very clear that the leader of the third party has her facts wrong on this. We completely accept the results of the Financial Accountability Officer, we respect his report; we just wish people would read it. If you actually do a careful

read of that report, he's very clear about what he is reporting on and what he is not reporting on. He looks at one side of the deal; he does not look at the advantages of the investments in infrastructure that we will be making as a result of this and other initiatives.

I urge the leader of the third party to actually read the report, and when she's speaking to Ontarians to acknowledge what he did say and what he did not say.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just have to listen to that response and re-ask the same question I just asked because that is absolutely the problem here. They refuse to respect the Financial Accountability Officer and they're discrediting his report.

The Premier promised that there would be independent oversight of the Hydro One sell-off. For months the Premier has insisted that Ontarians cannot have public hydro and at the same time new transit and infrastructure investments. The independent oversight shows that if the Premier sells Hydro One, we could have neither of these things.

Will the Liberal government start listening to the people of Ontario, to the business communities, to 185 municipalities, to First Nations and to Ontario's non-partisan watchdogs and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I refer the leader of the third party to the report, which I will quote. That's how much I actually respect this report, that I'm very happy to quote it here. The Financial Accountability Officer discusses on page 9 the scope of the review. He says very clearly:

"This report does not seek to:

“—assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One

“—forecast the impact of the partial sale of Hydro One on electricity rates

“—assess the prospects for performance improvements at Hydro One that might result from the partial sale or any future changes at Hydro One

“—assess the financial impact of any government spending financed by the sale of Hydro One, i.e. transportation projects financed by the Trillium Trust.”

We have complete respect for this report, we value this report, but we recognize the limitations of the scope as stated by the Financial Accountability Officer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What it does say is that debt will increase and what it does say is that revenues will decrease, and what it also says is this is the very worst way to fund infrastructure for the province of Ontario. That's what the report says.

1050

By stonewalling the FAO, this Premier is undermining an independent watchdog of this Legislature. By selling shares in Hydro One before the FAO tabled his report, the Premier is undermining an independent officer of the Legislature. By ignoring the red flags that the FAO has raised, the Premier is undermining an independent watchdog of this Legislature.

Will this Liberal government stop undermining the FAO, listen to his advice, and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be very, very clear: We appointed this independent Financial Accountability Officer through the report that we put forward in our budget last year, recognizing the importance of having that independent voice. We respect that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex.

Hon. Charles Sousa: In fact, the report very clearly validates what it is that we've been saying all along. We recognize there is forgone revenue. We know that. We've been talking about that throughout the proposals and in the assessment of our budget. We also know that you cannot borrow in perpetuity without then having other implications on our fiscal plan, so we are taking a balanced approach.

Furthermore, we are retaining ownership of this corporation, which enables us to benefit from future dividends as accrued. More importantly, we're reinvesting, dollar for dollar, all of what we are receiving into other projects and will receive even greater economic prosperity.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier: The finance minister knows that this province can't waste in perpetuity either, the way the Liberals have been wasting for a dozen years in this province.

When the Premier appointed her privatization committee, she promised that her plan to sell off Hydro One would be independently validated. Thankfully, the FAO stepped up to do that job, because that independent review was not going to be done by the Premier. She had no intention of fulfilling that promise.

But the Liberals have another chance now. Yesterday, the Keep Hydro Public coalition and the National Farmers Union called for the Ontario Energy Board to do a review of the sell-off.

Will the Liberal government join the call for the OEB to review the deal?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This proposal is being independently validated. The FAO has validated what we had said we were proposing.

More importantly, the most independent of all is the marketplace. They have independently validated the valuation of Hydro One at the high end, recognizing that the opportunities that exist with the proposal we brought forward will have positive opportunities for everyone.

We'll continue to hold a great ownership of this corporation. We'll continue to take great benefit from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex—second time.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And we're reinvesting those monies, one, to reduce debt and, secondly, to create new assets.

Also, most conditions would agree that for every dollar we invest, \$1.40 is returned. That is a much greater return than maintaining and holding the shares that are not producing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's good for Liberal insiders and good for Liberal friends on Bay Street, but it is bad for Ontario, Speaker.

The Liberals have been doing their very best to ignore and undermine the FAO. Maybe the Liberals are worried that a second review—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the Liberals are worried that a second review will show the exact same thing, that this deal is bad for Ontarians.

Will the government direct the Ontario Energy Board to review the Hydro One sell-off before it goes any further? Or is this government afraid that more independent oversight will mean more bad news for the Liberals?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite actually mistakes what broadening of ownership is. Forty per cent of the ownership of the first tranche is actually Ontarians—retail investors, the public of our province—and we still own 85% of the corporation on behalf of the province of Ontario.

More importantly, when she's speaking of the OEB, it's an important point: It is independently regulated. No one in this operation will be able to set the price, unless it's the OEB, similar to what they do with Toronto Hydro, as they do with Horizon and as they do with Brampton Hydro, all of which rival Hydro One to be more competitive, more efficient and more effective. That is why we added this discipline and that is why, in the end, it will be of greater benefit to the people of Ontario, because we're reinvesting all of that appreciation back into our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals promised independent validation of the Hydro One sell-off but so far, they're ignoring the FAO and refusing to hear from the OEB. Hydro One won't raise the money that the Premier promised. It won't lower debt like the Premier promised. Every time we learn something new about Hydro One's sell-off, the deal gets worse. The more we learn, the less the deal seems to do with transit.

If the Liberals are so convinced that it is a good deal, will they call on the OEB to review it so that Ontarians don't have to rely on blind faith in the Liberals because Lord knows where that gets us each and every time?

Hon. Charles Sousa: A prospectus has been brought forward. It has been reviewed by the marketplace and experts across the province—and Canada, for that matter. The FAO has validated the process and the valuation, and

he provided a number of degrees that that value could be. That value has now been assessed at the high end by the marketplace. So that part is done.

What we now need to do is to ensure that we reinvest that money for the benefit of the people and to ensure that we accrue greater returns through those investments. That has only been made available because of these transactions, and that is exactly what we do. We are not going to be borrowing in perpetuity, which will then enable us to have greater leverage. What we need to do is have greater benefit. We're doing so by reinvesting these assets, a component of which is sourced through this transaction. We will continue to retain a substantive share of an opportunity in Hydro One to enable us to have a greater benefit in the future.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, we've made it clear from the start that the intermittent nature of wind under the Liberals' Green Energy Act would ensure that it would never be a reliable source of electricity. We now have evidence that the level of production is actually lower than our worst predictions.

In 2009, Metrolinx, at considerable expense to the crown corporation, installed a 31-metre-tall wind turbine at its Lisgar station. However, this past August it was taken down because it failed miserably, producing less than 10% of the electricity that was expected.

Speaker, can the minister explain why, if Metrolinx has the common sense to cut its losses with unreliable wind power, the Liberal government continues to invest heavily in this expensive experiment?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The wind component of our energy supply mix is a very significant part of it. Number one: It's clean. In terms of the operating systems that are out there: I remember, while we were in estimates last week, that one of my colleagues checked the IESO app and was able to confirm on the spot that at that time in Ontario, there were 20 megawatts of wind being used in the system. That is reflective of the viability and the need for that type of energy mix.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When wind hit that high point last week, it was a result of a deadly hurricane in Mexico and Texas. That's not a good time to be bragging about your wind.

The minister knows full well that even if the industrial wind turbine at Lisgar station had met its projections, that station would still require the stability of a grid in case the wind is not blowing on that particular day.

This example speaks to the larger problem that this minister would not accept: namely, that wind alone cannot be relied upon. It must be backed up by another form of reliable generation, essentially forcing Ontarians to pay twice.

Yet the government continues down this wrong path. Under the price schedule for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order. Please finish.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Under the price schedule for 2016, the rate is increasing from 11.5 cents to 12.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This increased incentive means a flood of new wind on the grid, which will lead to an even more unstable and expensive energy supply.

Can the minister tell the House how many more examples like the Lisgar GO station will be needed before he stops signing these expensive, unreliable energy contracts?

1100

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm having trouble believing he is even having any credibility in his own premise, Mr. Speaker. He's finding one turbine owned by an entity that, for some reason, was dismantled. That's like seeing a Mercedes broken down on the side of the road and saying, "We should abolish all Mercedes." It's a ridiculous premise, and I can't answer any further than that.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Acting Premier. My recent freedom-of-information request shows that the number of children on the wait-list for IBI therapy this year is 2,192, and the number on the wait-list for ABA is an astonishing 13,966. This represents an increase of 75%. Estimates from the ministry show that only five more kids are receiving IBI this year than last year, and for ABA, 926 fewer children are receiving therapy than were receiving it two years ago. Yes, fewer children, and it's unacceptable.

Will the Acting Premier tell the minister to do the right thing for families and kids and immediately ensure all vulnerable kids on the wait-list have access to the supports they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the Minister of Children and Youth Services will want to speak to this issue, but I did want to take the opportunity to say thank you to the parents who are here today and the kids who are here today for being strong and very important advocates when it comes to services for kids with autism.

This has been a priority for our government. We have doubled the investment in autism services, but we know that the demand continues to grow. I know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services does want to talk about some of the progress we have made and some of the challenges that do remain.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, 16,000 kids on a wait-list for treatment is not progress. Study after study shows that early intervention is crucial for children with autism, and the government knows this.

Today, we are joined in the Legislature by two families directly impacted by the failure of this government to address the growing wait-list for essential therapy for children with ASD. These are just two of the hundreds of families, some who have to make those tough decisions like remortgaging their house or moving to another

province. Will the minister step up to the plate today and make sure these children receive the therapy they need immediately?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Our government and I absolutely recognize that families caring for young people with autism—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lambton, come to order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —face very unique challenges, and we are working very hard to support them. That's why we invested about \$190 million—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. That's why our government invests nearly \$190 million annually in autism services, an increase of more than \$100 million since 2003. But I know the wait-list persists—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: You lied to the people with autistic kids.

Interjections.

Interjection: Come on, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I know what I'm doing.

The member will withdraw, and if it happens again, I will name him. Withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I hear the call from families. I hear the call from parents. I hear the call from Autism Ontario. I thank the people who are here today to tell us more about the challenges, but we're very familiar—that more help is needed. I'm committed to doing more, and even when kids are on wait-lists, we have a number of services to support children and families while they're on a wait-list.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We all want to get those numbers down, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is responsible for regulating a number of sectors and ensuring Ontario consumers are provided reliable information to make the choices they need without being subjected to unfair practices. As part of this priority, I know the ministry is responsible for regulating moving companies. Many Ontarians rely on moving companies. They perform important work and are responsible for protecting the

belongings of their clients. However, I have seen reports about moving companies allegedly holding people's belongings from them as a way to demand payment.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please speak to the approach his ministry has taken to regulating the sector and provide advice on best practices for Ontarians?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member from York South-Weston is asking about a very important issue around consumer protection. Movers provide an important service for Ontarians, and my ministry has worked to better protect consumers in this sector. Since Ontarians entrust movers with their personal belongings, it's important that they conduct themselves appropriately and that we hold them to high standards.

Ontarians should know that when they do business with moving companies, they are covered by the Consumer Protection Act. The act requires that contracts with moving companies be clear and understandable. It also prohibits misrepresentation and makes it illegal for businesses or individuals to give consumers false information about themselves or the products or services that they offer. The act also contains a 10% rule that states that a consumer cannot be charged more than 10% above the estimated cost for moving in a written contract.

These are important protections for Ontarians, and we'll continue to enforce these protections to ensure Ontarians are supported.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I thank the minister for his update on the Consumer Protection Act and its application toward moving companies. It's very interesting to learn that his ministry has identified residential movers as an important area for consumer protection. I am confident that he will work on behalf of Ontarians and the residents of York South-Weston to ensure that adequate protections are in place.

I understand that the Premier also expressed interest in consumer protection for Ontarians using moving companies, as reflected in the minister's mandate letter. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please further update the House on steps his ministry has taken to strengthen consumer marketplace fairness with respect to moving companies?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again to the member from York South-Weston, who's a great advocate for her constituents, our ministry has recently implemented a risk-based and proactive compliance strategy for enforcing the Consumer Protection Act. The strategy will deploy resources to the sectors of greatest concern, including the residential moving sector. Our ministry has increased inspection powers to enforce the act, including the right for inspectors to enter a place of business in Ontario, examine relevant documentation and, where appropriate, issue orders to address marketplace concerns.

We've also commissioned a research report by Prism Economics and Analysis this past spring to provide insight into the residential moving industry. We've added

residential movers to our consumer advisory team's outreach sessions and have maintained detailed records of moving companies in our Consumer Beware List, which is posted online for Ontarians.

Speaker, I'm pleased with the steps that we've taken to protect consumers in this important area, and we'll continue to raise the standards for Ontarians.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines: Over the past month, I've had the opportunity to tour a number of mines operating in the province, and I'm sure you would agree with me that the work they do is remarkable.

By far the number one issue that continues to be raised is uncertainty in the permitting process in Ontario. The Fraser Institute's annual survey of mining companies reflects this and has again placed Ontario near the back of the pack for mining jurisdictions in Canada. In the investment attractiveness index, Ontario fell nine places, to 23rd in the world.

Minister, even with the changes made with the Mining Act, why does it take so long to permit a mine in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question from my critic on the other side of the House. We continue to work very, very closely with industry and with all stakeholders in the mining sector to continue to move mining projects forward.

We also work very hard to encourage investment in the province of Ontario, and we see successes continually as new mines continue to open up, despite the reality of the down cycle, particularly in commodity pricing.

One of the things we also do, working very closely with our Minister's Mining Act Advisory Committee that's in place, related to moving forward on a modernized Mining Act, is indeed find that balance as to how we can make sure that we put together the right system in terms of the permitting process, as well as being sensitive to the needs, to find that correct balance. This is an ongoing piece of work. We're very encouraged by the work that we're doing and continue to work closely with industry.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again through the Speaker to the minister: Uncertainty in the permitting process makes it harder for companies to justify investing money in Ontario projects. Noront Resources, trying to develop the Ring of Fire, had to wait two and a half years just to have their terms of reference approved. Just this morning, we heard from miners that it takes at least 110 permits to open a mine in Ontario. This uncertainty is compounded when taking into account the costs of high energy rates based on industrial consumers in Ontario.

Through the Speaker to the minister: How will we be able to bring into production new mines to replace those that will be closing in the next decade if the current permitting process in Ontario is so unpredictable?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I really do appreciate the question. It's an important one today when we do have, obviously, the miners here for Meet the Miners Day in the Legislature. We'll all be involved in activities throughout the day.

I think the important point to point out is that we recognize that it is indeed important to make sure that we do the best job we can in terms of moving the permitting process forward. We have a one-window approach, which, again, the member would know well about.

May I say I've already been part of a meeting with the Ontario Mining Association this morning. One of the things, actually, that Chris Hodgson, the president of the OMA, spoke about was the reality of an actual level of certainty in the province of Ontario related to the rules and regulations that are in place—which is not to say it's a perfect system, but again, that's where the challenge is: to find that balance. When we began the modernization of the Mining Act, we said very early on that this is about balance, finding a way to maintain a positive—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. My question is again to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Each year, Minister, we have Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park, where mining companies come to enlighten us on issues they are facing in the mining sector. We welcome them here today.

Each year, they warn us that hydro prices are threatening their exploration, operation and ability to refine here in Ontario. Their alarm bells appear to fall on deaf ears, and several companies have left the province, taking good jobs with them. Minister, can you tell our friends here today in the mining sector how the fire sale of Hydro One is going to help these companies with their already crippling energy costs?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks again for the question—I appreciate it—from my critic from the New Democratic Party. The fact is, as the member knows well, that we are working very, very closely with the mining sector and have worked hard to provide significant breaks in terms of the costs of energy, recognizing that energy costs are significantly higher, particularly on the smelting side and in parts of the mining industry, which is why we are so proud of bringing permanency to the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, which has been hugely beneficial. Thank you to the Minister of Finance for bringing that in. That has made a huge difference.

There are also other significant incentive programs the Minister of Energy has put in place as well. We continue to work closely with the industry to find the best possible way we can help them reduce their energy costs. As a result, we're seeing more new mines opening up. That's the positive side of the story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Minister, there is no positive; there is no plan. This year, the message is loud and clear. The mining industry in this province is unanimous that they're worried about the sale of Hydro One, and they have not been consulted. They expect their costs to go up tens of millions and potentially lose good-paying jobs here in Ontario.

When industry comes to this government for help, they get nothing—and now this. This government is content to sit on the sidelines and watch as mining companies leave this province. Minister, why hasn't this government consulted with one of our biggest resource industries about the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the member across may have obviously had a very different conversation, but I can tell you about the conversation that we had this morning with the Ontario Mining Association with our caucus members. I am grateful to all those who were able to show up for it. Indeed, while there are many, many challenges in the mining sector, there are also so many positive stories.

We are continuing to work closely with the Ontario Mining Association and all their members, as well as the other very important partners in the mining sector, which obviously includes communities that are going to be impacted by future mining developments. We're going to continue to work with that. Again, I'm grateful for the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program being made permanent—\$120 million a year, rebates of almost \$500 million over the last number of years.

We're going to keep doing the good work. We're going to be positive. I wish you'd join me in being positive.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. We all know that people with developmental disabilities are very valuable members of our society. We also know that like everyone else, people with disabilities want the opportunity to participate and be active members of our workforce. I know that the minister is committed to leveling the playing field for people with disabilities when it comes to workforce participation.

Earlier this year, her ministry provided an update about the employment and modernization fund for individuals with developmental disabilities. It's part of our government's \$810-million investment strategy for community and developmental services that was approved in the 2014 budget.

Will the minister please provide this House with an update on the employment and modernization fund and the impact that it is having—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Minister of Community and Social Services?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for Beaches—East York for the question.

Our government recognizes and values the important contributions made by individuals with developmental disabilities to our communities and to our workforce. I'm so pleased to say that the investments made through my ministry's employment and modernization fund are starting to yield results on the ground that support inclusion and independence.

One of the projects that received funding is the new Centre for Excellence in Employment Services which is run by the Ontario Disability Employment Network. They have been working with many businesses to provide training and tools so that people with developmental disabilities are hired for competitive jobs in their communities. I'm hearing first-hand that more employers are starting to understand that hiring adults with developmental disabilities is good for business. Whether it's at a grocery store in Port Perry or at your local Tim Hortons, more and more individuals with developmental disabilities are securing competitive employment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I very much appreciate the minister's response and the update she's given the House today. I know that the people of Ontario and certainly my constituents in Beaches—East York very much appreciate the hard work she's doing on this file.

It's clear that by investing in better employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities, we are investing in their independence, their health and their overall participation in society. I understand that there are many more projects that support the employment of individuals with developmental disabilities and that have been approved by the fund in the past year. I look forward to hearing more about them in the future.

Will the minister then please tell us about the next steps for the fund and how we will be moving forward to help build Ontario up?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As the member from Beaches—East York has expressed, there is great value in working towards greater inclusion for people with developmental disabilities. In fact, while securing a job is certainly one of the best routes to social inclusion, it also leads to better general health for the individuals involved.

The employment and modernization fund has two objectives: One is to create opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to secure competitive employment in the community, and the second is to support projects that lead to more individualized and responsive services and supports. LiveWorkPlay in Ottawa is a great example, as is the Paro Centre in Thunder Bay. In fact, there were 38 communities and agencies across the province that were successful in their applications to the fund this year, and my ministry is currently planning for the next call for proposals.

I look forward to many more successful projects.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Education. I'm asking for meaningful action on this

government's special education formula. I'm asking the minister responsible for the ongoing mess in special education to address the program cuts, the staff firings and, most importantly, the serious impacts on vulnerable students whose needs she is not meeting.

The minister needs to explain why she is spending \$3.7 million of taxpayer money to pay teachers' unions for negotiations, when she could have used it to hire back-fired educational assistants to help our vulnerable students stay in school full days, not just part of the day. We want the money to go to students with special needs, including those with autism.

When will the minister stand up for the vulnerable children and put their teachers back in the classroom?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you. The member opposite—

Interjections.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member opposite mentioned negotiations, and I'm very happy to report to the House this morning that yesterday we concluded agreements, first of all, with CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents most of the caretaking and maintenance staff and some of the education workers; also with ETFO, the elementary public teachers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: I can tell you, the parents, the special education assistants nor the children are standing up and giving you applause right now.

Back to the Minister of Education: The minister must know that her funding formula is not meeting the need. Between 2001 and 2014, the student-teacher ratios in special education have jumped from 22 students per teacher to 37. That's a huge cut in special education teaching staff.

The minister can try to spin and cover up this scandal all she wants, but she must admit that despite repeatedly saying she would not cut, she would not fire, the reality is that special education staff are losing jobs and our most vulnerable students are missing out.

Mr. Speaker, we want the Minister of Education to treat special education students with fairness and equity. Will she match the platitudes she just gave herself with real action and commit to putting students first by reinstating the fired special education teachers?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I just want to make it clear that in all five of the collective agreements which we have concluded, there have been absolutely no cuts to the classroom.

Specifically, with respect to special education, the funding for special education has actually increased, up to \$2.72 billion this year. That represents a 68% increase since 2003. In fact, it's an increase of 9% since the 2012-13 school year. That 9% increase is at a time when the overall enrolment in the province of Ontario has gone down, which means that on a per pupil—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy: A privatized Hydro One has no incentive to promote energy conservation. It makes more profit when people use more electricity, not less. We saw an example of this behaviour earlier this year when Nova Scotia's privatized electricity utility fought against the government's new energy conservation programs.

Will the government put energy conservation first, put the public interest first, and stop the further privatization of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, of course I don't accept the premise of the question.

In November and December of last year, we had 70-plus LDCs, local distribution companies, sign contracts with the IESO for the new conservation contracts program moving forward. That will save 30 terawatts up to 2032, a very, very aggressive target.

The important thing is, the private sector companies signed those contracts and are implementing our conservation program. That includes Fortis. It includes hybrid companies that have partial private ownership. It includes municipal utilities. They're all engaged in the issue.

If you look at the gas side, which the OEB manages as well, private sector Enbridge and Union are exceptional in their conservation programs. They are poster child cases for what can happen in conservation. Private—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, Germany sold off parts of its transmission grid in the 1990s, and politicians there now admit this was a historic mistake. Germans now realize that in order to connect people to renewable energy sources, they need a publicly owned grid. Germans have learned the hard way that once the public grid is sold off, it is very difficult and very costly to get it back.

Will the government learn from Germany's historic mistake and cancel the further privatization of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member can dream about how bad things are or can be, but let's look at what's actually happening. Hydro One has signed a contract. That contract binds them to abide by the conservation program that we have. Whether it's pre- or post-IPO, they're bound by it. They have very, very positive conservation programs, including ductless heat pumps, of which in Nova Scotia they've installed 40,000. They're saving customers an average of \$1,000. That pilot project is going on now, and I believe that the pilot project they have will be implemented to the benefit of ratepayers in Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question this morning is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Today, the Ontario Mining Association hosts their annual Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. This day looks at the positive aspects of mining in our province, and it's a

great opportunity to participate in and learn about the incredible role that mining plays not only in my riding of Sudbury but across the province and in our everyday lives.

For instance, Ontario has world expertise in mine financing, geology and engineering, stable exploration in mining industries, and one of the lowest mining tax rates in Canada. As well, we have the advantages of a strong economy, competitive business costs, and world-class research development in environment and in mining.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister speak of the significance of mining to our provincial economy and to the current status of mining in our province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks so much to the member from Sudbury for the great question—obviously somebody who very much is a strong advocate for the sector.

Let me begin by saying that despite the real challenges in the mining sector, Ontario remains the leading jurisdiction for the exploration and production of minerals in Canada and a major player across the world. There are currently 43 operating mines in the province: 14 base metal mines, 16 gold mines and, of course, one diamond mine.

The mineral development sector plays an incredibly important role in our economy, as it does very much in our day-to-day lives. Not everyone knows this, but the mining sector directly employs over 26,000 people in the province of Ontario and 50,000 in the mining supply and services sector. The value of mineral production in Ontario in 2014 was \$11 billion, which is an unprecedented high. There's much more I'd like to say, and I look forward to the supplementary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you will stop. Supplementary.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is part of our government's plan to build up Ontario by creating a dynamic and supportive environment where business can prosper. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has made it clear that our government is doing just that when it comes to the mining sector.

The global mining economy is evolving and our new competition is always emerging. I know that our government is committed to ensuring that Ontario remains a world leader in mining exploration and mining investment. Can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to maximize Ontario's mineral potential and support a modern and innovative industry, ensuring that Ontario's mining sector continues to thrive for decades to come?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks again for the question—a great question. Let me just say as strongly as I can that our government is absolutely committed to supporting a strong, healthy and prosperous provincial mineral sector. It's important for people to know that we've invested over \$160 million in Ontario mineral sector activities since 2003.

I referenced, in an earlier response, that the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program—a continued investment of up to \$120 million per year and, of course, made a permanent program because we recognize how import-

ant the mineral sector is—long-term investments that are incredibly important.

That's why Meet the Miners Day is so important to us. It helps us reflect on the role of the mine and mineral sectors in our lives. Certainly, on behalf of our Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, I'm pleased to join the Ontario Mining Association for Meet the Miners and invite all members to come to the reception this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230. It's going to be a terrific day.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Many seniors in our province want to stay in their homes for as long as possible before moving to a long-term-care home. They rely on home care services and the help of family and friends to receive the support they require.

We know from Health Quality Ontario's Measuring Up report that one third of informal caregivers report distress, and some are unable to continue providing care.

1130

Can the minister please explain why these burnout numbers continue to increase despite the government's dedicated provincial secretariat focused on improving the quality of life for seniors and their families?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the member for the question, and I'm sure that the Minister of Health wants to address the issue.

Let me say that I think we are all familiar with respect to our seniors population today. As of June of this year, people over the age of 65 are more than the people under the age of 14.

We have done a lot with respect to looking after our seniors. I have to say that a lot of seniors in the member's community as well enjoy some of the programs that we have been able to put in place. The Seniors Community Grant Program has been reaching some 116,000 seniors, and they are in every corner of our province.

With respect to the seniors in long-term-care homes, I'm sure that the minister wants to address the issue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back to the minister for seniors: We know from the Measuring Up report that this government's strategy—if it has one—is just not measuring up. This government made a deliberate effort to keep seniors living at home, but they haven't provided the supports necessary to do so.

The Auditor General said the government needs to take a hard look, to improve CCAC home care services. Without the home care they need, many seniors turn to the long-term-care system, where they end up waiting around 116 days for a spot. That's unacceptable. The end result: Informal caregivers are reporting record levels of burnout, doubling over the last four years.

Can the minister provide any hope to seniors' loved ones, who, through no fault of their own, can no longer provide the care they need?

Hon. Mario Sergio: To the Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the member opposite for his question. I want to assure this House and the member opposite that, in fact, we are investing in the care of our seniors. I just want to give you some examples: \$2 billion in funding, and a 2% increase in 2015-16 for resident care needs. We have opened 10,000 new long-term-care beds.

In fact, I was in London on Friday—

Interjections.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I was in Kitchener, sorry. I was in Kitchener on Friday with the deputy minister. Members opposite, from your caucus, were there as well. I was there for the opening of a brand new long-term-care facility—192 new beds. That's 192 new beds. That's adding 192 beds to our footprint.

That is just an example of how we're expanding care for our seniors.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. In 2012, this government cancelled our only passenger train in northern Ontario. The reason was because they had an equivalent bus line, and they were going to provide enhanced bus service. Since then, they've closed bus stations, and yesterday we learned that now they are cancelling bus routes.

Why is it acceptable for this government to deny public transit to people in northern Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member knows, as we've spoken about it a great deal, we are very proud of the fact that we made a decision a little over a year and a half ago to keep four of the five lines of the ONTC in public hands, and that certainly included the motor coach service.

What we also made clear was that we were going to be working closely with the communities and with him to make sure that we provided services to all the communities where the Northlander no longer operated. Right now, the ONTC is identifying changes to the way that they operate, to maintain and ensure that sustainability.

But our commitment to the motor coach services remains as strong as ever. The member also knows we put \$6.2 million over three years to purchase new motor coaches, almost all of which have been put in service over the last short period of time.

The long and the short is that we're going to continue to make sure we ensure that long-term sustainability while we provide an efficient and well-run ONT service for people in northeastern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: To the minister, or to the Acting Premier: While they claim their commitment remains strong, as we speak, services are being cancelled. Now it takes three days to get to Ottawa.

Once again, why is it acceptable, when this government keeps talking about increased access to transit, increased access to transportation, that they continue to cut access to transit in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The facts are that we are working with the communities and with the public to make sure that we provide the services for motor coach services that are in place. We have made a significant investment of \$23 million. Most significantly—I know this received support from many in the House, certainly those on the opposition side—we were able to keep four of those five lines in public hands. There was a time when that was not the case. But the bottom line is we are providing services to all the communities that were previously served by the Northlander, and we are indeed maintaining those services.

There are decisions that need to be made by ONTC's management to ensure the long-term sustainability, because that is what is most crucial: that we make sure we provide the services, that we remain as sensitive as possible to the realities that are faced by the travelling public. That's what we're doing, and we're going to be continuing to do it in the best and the most sensitive way that we can.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I would like to correct the record in one of my answers to the Leader of the Opposition. I referred to an article in the Toronto Star. In fact, it was in the Globe and Mail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member has the right to correct his record.

VISITEURS

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de présenter un groupe de la France qui sont ici dans le cadre du projet réciprocité France-Canada. Ils sont accompagnés par Léonie Tchatchat de La Passerelle. Alors, bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I neglected to mention someone in the Speaker's gallery. My other brother, the brother of former Speaker of the House Steve Peters, Joe Peters is here—thank you, Joe—and my constituent assistant from the riding of Brant, Bob Yuhasz.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on an amendment to the motion for allocation

of time on Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

On November 2, Mr. Gravelle moved government notice of motion number 43.

Mr. McNaughton then moved that the motion be amended as follows:

“That the motion be amended by striking out”—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right.

Mr. McNaughton then moved that the motion be amended by striking out everything following the second paragraph up to and including “Monday, November 30, 2015,” and replacing it with the following—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): “That the committee be authorized to meet on Wednesday, November 25, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Ottawa; and on Thursday, November 26, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m. in Thunder Bay, for the purpose of public hearings on the bill.

“That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 115:

“Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly’s website and Canada NewsWire; and

“That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Friday, November 13, 2015; and

“That following the deadline, the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the committee with a list of requests to appear; and

“That a member from all three recognized parties prioritize and return the list by 6 p.m. on Friday, November 13, 2015; and

“That the Clerk of the Committee schedule witnesses from these prioritized lists; and

“That each witness will receive up to 15 minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

“That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2015; and”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somebody wanted to hear this.

“That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Friday, November 27, 2015; and

“That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, November 30, 2015, at its regularly scheduled

time for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

“On Monday, November 30, 2015 at 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

“That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, December 2, 2015.”

We are now dealing with Mr. McNaughton’s amendment to the motion.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Arnot, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Oriziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Qaadir, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Thibeault, Glenn
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Vernile, Daine
Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 51.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the amendment lost.

Are the members ready to vote on the main motion?

Mr. Gravelle has moved government notice of motion number 43. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the “ayes” have it.
 Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1148 to 1149.
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Gravelle has moved government notice of motion number 43.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Nagvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Kwintner, Monte	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Mahli, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amit	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Thibeault, Glenn
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Vernile, Daiene
Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Arnett, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a point of order, the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31

March, 2016, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, 26 October, 2015. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce Kyle Nimmrichter. Kyle is from the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network; he's a volunteer.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm excited to share with my colleagues today that on Wednesday of this week, parliamentarians across Canada will be travelling to Ontario to participate in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Canada region, outreach program taking place November 4 to 8.

CWP is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2015, and this year's program is filled with discussions and activities all centred on celebrating women from the past and present who make a difference in their communities. This program will also focus on inspiring today's youth to become engaged and to make a difference.

While the CWP has always aimed to empower female leaders, a unique aspect of this year's program is to focus on women in the agri-food sector as well as rural Ontario. For the first time in eight years, this program will be hosted in both urban and rural settings. We're going to be wrapping up this particular program at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

The whole essence and theme of this year's program is engaging women to make a difference. I invite everyone to participate in a program the Speaker will be hosting on Thursday, right after question period, where we will be celebrating women who have led the way. After that, we'll be travelling to Guelph and engaging with women involved in the agri-food sector. Ultimately, they are making a difference.

We're going to wrap up the program by, hopefully, inspiring young women at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair to stay involved, be active and make a difference.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: The number of children waiting for IBI now stands at 2,192, an increase of 29% from just two years ago. The number for ABA has increased from under 8,000 two years ago to an astonishing 13,966 today—a disgraceful increase of 75%. The shock provoked by these numbers is compounded when we look at current service levels. There are only five more children receiving IBI than did last year and, incredibly, there are 926 fewer children receiving ABA treatment.

I was joined at a news conference this morning by Autism Ontario as well as two families who are affected each and every day by the failure of this government. Kara Onofrio was there, as well as Linda and Tony DiMambro with their son Anthony. After hearing these families speak about their own experience, nobody could be left in any doubt that we need to do more. They fought back tears and stood strong to tell their story. We are all indebted to the hundreds of families who do what they have to do when they are let down by their government. They remortgage their homes. They cash in their RRSPs. They say goodbye to any semblance of a normal life.

This morning, the minister yet again referred way back to almost a decade ago and called it progress. Since those increases, they need to have continued growth instead of squandering billions.

SOUTHLAKE REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's an honour to stand in the House to represent the great riding of Newmarket-Aurora. Today I want to recognize the great organizational culture and work of our local hospital, Southlake Regional Health Centre, led by CEO Dr. Dave Williams.

Southlake continues to inspire us through its "Southlake Way." This is a commitment to provide a shockingly excellent experience to each and every person who comes through its doors. It's through five core values that Southlake hospital achieves this goal every day: putting patients first; pushing the envelope; honouring commitments; speaking up; and by simply giving a damn. Yes, that's actually a core value, Mr. Speaker.

Patients are given outstanding service when entering Southlake. The hospital is also a leader in innovative health care and recently celebrated five years of comprehensive cancer care services in the Central LHIN region and the opening of the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre at Southlake.

To be celebrating its fifth anniversary is an exciting milestone. It is exciting for our towns and for the hospital, but more importantly, it's exciting for the people it serves every single day; for those individuals who face this disease and for their families who find support within the walls of Southlake and the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre.

I'm proud to represent such an innovative hospital, filled with committed and dedicated staff, that continues to inspire everyone in the community of Newmarket-Aurora.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to share a town of New Tecumseh's committee of the whole resolution that was passed on June 15, 2015, and adopted by council on June 22, 2015.

The town of New Tecumseh is in the south end of my riding, home to Honda of Canada Manufacturing. This

resolution is against the Liberal government's plan to sell off Hydro One. The resolution reads, in part, as follows:

"Whereas the public electricity system in Ontario is a critical asset to the economy and vital to the living standard and well-being of all Ontarians; and

"Whereas it is essential that Ontarians maintain public control and public decision-making with respect to electricity; and

"Whereas experience in other jurisdictions shows that privatization typically means consumers pay more for electricity; and ...

"Whereas our public electricity system currently generates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the provincial government every year to help pay for public services we all depend on; and

"Whereas the sale of shares in Hydro One will provide a short-term financial gain for the province in exchange for a much larger long-term financial loss; and

"Whereas the provincial government has no mandate from voters to sell any part of Hydro One; ...

"Therefore be it resolved that the town of New Tecumseh call on the provincial government to:

"—Halt the sale of any part of Hydro One, and maintain Hydro One as a public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians...."

Mr. Speaker, some 200 municipalities have passed resolutions like the one passed by New Tecumseh council. I'd like the House to know that they're a non-partisan council and they want the government to listen to them.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Imagine the surprise and imagine the anger that northerners woke up to just this week when they found out that bus service from Hearst to Kapuskasing, Cochrane and points in between is being cut and that we're losing full-day bus service in towns like Kapuskasing and Hearst—this at a time when the government says it's got to make massive investments in infrastructure when it comes to transportation. They are at the same time selling off Ontario Northland, which they essentially tried to do at a loss; and now, after making a promise that they were going to enhance bus service and that we were going to get better service by way of buses than we got with trains, the government's going back on its word and is eliminating bus service where it exists. Places like Cochrane, Kapuskasing and Hearst are losing bus service, and in some cases are losing all-day service in order to get three buses a week.

This is not what the government should be doing, if the government is serious about dealing with infrastructure in this province and making sure that we have good transportation infrastructure. The province goes farther north than just the north of Toronto. There are places like Cochrane, there are places like Kapuskasing, there are places like Hearst that need to have that service to be able to function. When they see the government on the one

hand saying it wants to make investments in transportation and at the same time cutting transportation services in northern Ontario, they see this for what it is: It's a rule for people in one part of the province that's very different than the other.

1510

MELANOMA

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today, the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network is launching their newest website portal. The portal will take you to a part of the website that has information on melanoma.

Approximately 6,500 Canadians are diagnosed with melanoma annually, and this number increases every year. The Canadian Cancer Survivor Network recognized the heavy burden that the diagnosis of melanoma places not only on those who are diagnosed with it, but on their families and extended support network. In response, CCSN has created an online portal recognizing and addressing the experience of melanoma, whether in its early or more advanced stages.

The melanoma portal provides a trusted and accurate source of melanoma information. Sections on the portal centralize information on the diagnosis and treatment of melanoma, provide information and resources on financial planning, and address the issues that caregivers face. As a cancer survivor myself, I know the value that resources such as these can provide for treatment and recovery.

I commend the work that the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network does to help educate people on cancers such as melanoma. Congratulations to the CCSN, and thank you for all that you do.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Laurie Scott: The poor policy choices of the Liberal government continue to make life increasingly unaffordable in Ontario. As of November 1 of this year, the cost of on-peak electricity is now 17.5 cents per kilowatt hour. This is over four times more than what the rate was when this government first came to power. The new set of increases of electricity continues to force rural and suburban Ontarians into energy poverty. There are so many people in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock who are faced with an impossible choice of either paying their hydro bills or putting food on their tables.

Now the Liberal government wants to sell Hydro One without any assurances to Ontarians that hydro rates won't continue to skyrocket. Some 185 municipalities, including some in Peterborough county and Haliburton county, have all passed resolutions that oppose the sale. Ontarians are resoundingly against this sale. All of the provincial government's independent officers are opposed to the sale of Hydro One, but the government seems to conveniently neglect all of that.

By 2019-20, once the full 60% is sold, the Financial Accountability Officer has said that the province will

suffer an ongoing, negative impact on budget balance; \$750 million in annual revenue will be lost. The government talks about just how important infrastructure is, yet it is satisfied with selling a public asset for only 2.5% of its plan.

I implore the government to finance infrastructure without choking Ontario's sustainability for generations to come.

DIWALI

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about a very special celebration for the South Asian community in Ontario. Diwali, or the festival of lights, is celebrated by millions of Hindus, Jains and Sikhs around the world. This Hindu festival celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, or good over evil. On November 11, people across Ontario and around the world will mark Diwali through prayers, the lighting of lamps and by gathering with friends, family and loved ones.

But, Mr. Speaker, the celebrations have already started. This past Sunday, I took part in a Vibrant Milton Connections Diwali celebration. The evening was an incredible display of culture, community and tradition. The room was packed with friends, families and neighbours all joining together to celebrate the festival of lights. It was wonderful. Children, parents and grandparents enjoyed tasty food, stepped to some tunes and shopped at a fantastic marketplace. There were also some amazing performances put on by some very talented young people.

I want to thank Vibrant Milton Connections for pulling together a terrific event. This event was a wonderful way to honour and promote South Asian culture and heritage in Ontario. I'm proud to be a part of a diverse and culturally rich community like Halton. It's a place where our diversity is celebrated and makes us all stronger. We are fortunate to live in a multicultural society where our diversity is valued.

Thank you, and a very happy early Diwali to everyone.

IRVING UNGERMAN

Mr. Mike Colle: Today, I rise to give tribute to a true giant who passed away last Tuesday, October 27, and that's Mr. Irving Ungerman.

Irv, as he was commonly known, was born down here in Kensington Market, not too far from here. He was born at two and a half pounds. He survived to become, I think, an incredible builder in this city and in this country.

Irv was the city of Toronto's boxing champ when he was 15. He went on to run an incredible poultry business, Royce Dupont Poultry. He was always supporting charitable activities like the Reena Foundation and Variety Village.

He was one of the main movers of getting the Blue Jays to Toronto, along with Paul Godfrey. He championed great boxers from Canada: George Chuvalo and Gray. He essentially got behind all good things and good

people. He was an honourary member of the RCMP. He was a great friend of the former Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander. He won the Order of Ontario. This little guy was a giant.

As they say in Yiddish, if you don't mind, he was a true mensch—a “mensch” means a wonderful human being. He was charitable, he was generous and he loved this country and he loved this city. He was the last of a breed.

God bless Irv for all that he did, and his wife, Sylvia, and all his kids and grandkids. We're going to miss you, champ.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, the member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you for your indulgence, Speaker. I just want to take the opportunity to introduce a friend from Windsor. Corporal Bruce Moncur is here at the invitation of the Lieutenant Governor to preview a documentary in which he is highlighted as an injured Afghanistan veteran. I want to thank him for being here today, and I want to thank him for his service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, on a little point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes, indeed, little but very important: I'd like to introduce and welcome into this Legislative Assembly a kinesiologist from my region of Peel, Mr. Qusai Gulamhussein.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As previously said, thank you to all the members who made statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated November 3, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CY AND RUBY'S ACT (PARENTAL RECOGNITION), 2015

LOI CY ET RUBY DE 2015 SUR LA RECONNAISSANCE PARENTALE

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, the Vital Statistics Act and other Acts with respect to parental recognition / Projet de loi 137, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à la reconnaissance parentale.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Currently, subsection 1(1) of the Children's Law Reform Act states that for all purposes of the law of Ontario, the “natural parents” of a child are the child's parents. That provision is repealed and in its place, the bill requires parentage to be determined in accordance with rules set out in part II of the act that address various possible arrangements under which persons choose to parent a child. These include the following: rules respecting persons who provide human reproductive material or an embryo for the assisted reproduction of a child; and rules respecting persons who enter into agreements respecting parentage, whether the birth of the child is as a result of assisted reproduction or not.

1520

Other amendments to the act include providing that the determination of a biological or genetic relationship between a person and a child on the basis of an ancestry test is not determinative of parentage.

Subsection 9(1) of the Vital Statistics Act is amended to replace the reference to “the mother and the father” as persons who certify the birth of a child with “the parents.” Other amendments to the act provide for circumstances in which a child may have more than two parents.

Various consequential amendments are also made to both the Children's Law Reform Act, the Vital Statistics Act and other acts.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item numbers 6 and 7 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item numbers 6 and 7 be waived. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's my pleasure to rise as we recognize the first week of November as Crime Prevention Week in Ontario. This is a week when we focus on the things that all Ontarians can do to help prevent crime in their communities. It's also a time to showcase local initiatives that have helped to prevent and reduce crime in the province and enhance community safety and well-being.

We celebrate the people who work tirelessly to prevent crime and keep their communities safe.

Ontario remains one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. Since 2003, Ontario's police-reported crime rate has dropped by 34% and Ontario's violent crime rate dropped by 27%. In fact, Ontario has had the lowest crime rate of any province and territory every year since 2005.

Ontario's police services are often at the forefront of these crime prevention efforts. We are enormously grateful to them for that, but crime prevention involves more than the police alone. It involves all members of the community, including parents, educators, social service providers, police, correctional services staff and health care workers. Everyone needs to work together to identify those issues that could have an impact on the incidence of crime, and intervene to prevent it.

I want to take this opportunity, Speaker, to pay tribute to all those community members and organizations right across this province that are working hard to prevent crime in our communities. Their work involves identifying the most vulnerable and at-risk people in the community and providing the services they need to help them avoid becoming victims of crime or perpetrators of crime.

These principles of effectiveness, community and collaboration are at the heart of the Strategy for a Safer Ontario that the government is now developing. Ontario's Strategy for a Safer Ontario is about finding smarter and better ways to do things, and applying evidence-based policies to improve outcomes. Our government knows that building safer, stronger communities is the foundation on which we build a safer, stronger Ontario, and that when communities plan together and work together, they achieve better results for residents.

These same values of collaboration and co-operation will be at the centre of our effective, sustainable and community-based model for policing in the 21st century. They will guide us as we rewrite Ontario's policing framework to reflect the priorities and realities of the 21st century to ensure we continue to build even safer communities and a stronger province.

Tomorrow, I will be speaking to a group of middle school students at St. Simon Stock Catholic school at the launch of "Pink Is the New Blue" anti-bullying campaign. It's one of the critical efforts being organized

to help kids deal with bullying—one of the greatest threats to the safety and well-being of our kids today. Initiatives like this to protect the most vulnerable are critical to preventing crime and ensuring community safety and well-being, and represent the kind of proactive, evidence-based community safety planning we want to encourage across the province.

We must continue our efforts to strengthen partnerships, invest in our people and create opportunities to prevent crime and promote safe and healthy communities. A dollar invested now in crime prevention and early intervention avoids \$7 spent on prosecution, incarceration and other associated costs in the future. It is this idea of proactive intervention and multi-sectoral collaboration that is behind the situation table model and a range of other community safety and well-being initiatives that are being created around our province.

These projects bring police and social service providers together to work collaboratively and rapidly mobilize services that will reduce risks that could lead to victimization or harm. These models show new ways of sharing information across the social sphere between cultural, religious, community and health care groups, providing opportunities for early intervention that help prevent crime and improve outcomes for local residents and the community. These models make police services part of a stronger safety net rather than being the entire net themselves. This frees up resources to help solve more crimes and prevent even more from happening in the first place.

These are the types of programs that we must continue supporting, investing in and championing, because the only way to truly fight crime is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Our government is committed to investing in its people, strengthening our neighbourhoods, and building safer, stronger communities right across Ontario.

This week, I encourage all members to take part in Crime Prevention Week activities in their respective communities and to continue to do their part to enhance community safety and well-being, and, by extension, crime prevention all across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to respond to the minister's statement on Crime Prevention Week. As the PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I am committed to reinforcing a strong working relationship between our caucus and the front-line officers who keep this province safe.

I'd also like to begin by acknowledging leaders in the Ontario policing community, including OPP Commissioner Vince Hawkes, Ontario Provincial Police Association Acting President Doug Lewis, Police Association of Ontario President Bruce Chapman, and Chief Jeff McGuire, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I'm grateful for the work of Chief Gary Conn and his entire staff of

officers, as well as that of OPP Detachment Commander Brad Coulbeck and his counterpart in Essex county, Glenn Miller.

This year's theme for the week running November 1 to 7 is, "Working Together to Improve Community Safety and Well-Being—a Shared Commitment in Ontario." It encourages police, levels of government and communities to work together to prevent and decrease crime by addressing concerns and creating strategies. Most people think of police as people whom we call on to respond to crime, but the reality is that they devote much of their time to crime prevention. They educate citizens on how they can protect themselves against becoming a victim of crime, and forge relationships with their communities to promote public trust.

Men and women on police forces from across the province risk their lives each and every day to keep our communities safe. I refer to them as our unsung heroes. We can do more to help these heroes. They face incredibly stressful situations each day and sometimes witness horrific scenes. PTSD is a real issue for many of our police officers, and we must help them together as a province.

Crime prevention starts at home. Following some easy and inexpensive tips can help reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime yourself. Here are three tips to help prevent crime:

- (1) Always lock your home, garage and vehicle doors.
- (2) Never reveal personal information to anyone online, to help prevent identity theft.
- (3) Be wary of any website, caller or business asking for your credit card information or even your social insurance number.

1530

Chief Gary Conn and the Chatham-Kent Police Service understand and value the role that everyone in the community plays when it comes to preventing crime. This week, they are highlighting individual communities and thanking them for their efforts.

Chief Conn put it very well: "Crime prevention and community policing is what we do.... In addition to the day-to-day work that members of the Chatham-Kent police do, there are many community associations working at a local level assisting with well-being and safety issues in our community albeit in a non-traditional crime prevention manner. These community associations are doing great work"—Speaker, especially at the local level—"and our service would like to take this opportunity to highlight that work."

This is only one of the countless initiatives happening simultaneously throughout the province. Halton regional police are inviting residents to learn more about how to protect themselves from break-ins during Crime Prevention Week by visiting with a police officer in multiple locations throughout the week. Many police services, such as the Toronto police, Hamilton police and Waterloo regional police, are now conducting gun amnesty programs to prevent crime and keep their communities safe. These programs allow gun owners to call police and have weapons picked up without threat of prosecution.

While it is the respective police services that put on these programs, they ultimately depend on buy-in from their communities for their success. Crime Prevention Week is, in fact, a way to start a conversation between police officers, government leaders, community leaders and individual citizens. When each part of our society recognizes, respects and reinforces each other's efforts to keep our community safe, that is when we truly can prevent crime. Speaker, working together, we can make Ontario's communities safe and resilient.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Chatham-Kent—Essex for his statement.

Further responses?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm honoured to have the opportunity to rise in the Legislature, as the NDP's critic for community safety and correctional services, to recognize Crime Prevention Week and to thank our police officers, our police services and all front-line services for the role they play in crime prevention.

I appreciate the work that front-line officers do every day in my community of Oshawa, but police officers across the province work tirelessly to protect Ontarians and keep our communities safe, so I appreciate any opportunity that I am granted to thank them for their dedicated service and to recognize how important their role is.

I also appreciate the opportunity to speak about crime prevention and where this government can improve its efforts by providing our front-line workers with the tools they need to prevent crimes and to keep our communities safe.

It is said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. By its very nature, crime prevention is forward thinking. It is about taking steps now to mitigate problems down the road. It is about investing in the future safety and well-being of our province. It is a complex issue, but an important one, and I'm glad that we're discussing it today.

Speaker, there are two ways that you can beat a common cold. First, you can try to eat well, get proper exercise, dress appropriately for the weather and potentially avoid the cold altogether, or you can skip these steps and try to scarf down as much vitamin C as you can find after you've already become ill. The same applies to any problem. You can look forward, you can look at trends and contributing factors, and attempt to address a problem before it happens, or you can find yourself reacting when it is already too late.

Sadly, we see much more of the latter from this government: more reacting than investing, more short-term than long-term thinking. The fact is that we know there are consistent contributing factors to crime, and they are the same factors that leave our health care and social services strained. There are investments that our government can make to improve the quality of life for all Ontarians, like a properly funded public education system, a stronger social safety net and investment in mental health.

Our communities work together to prevent crime every day. Community organizations, employment strat-

egies and youth engagement help to create positive pathways for our community members and alternatives to criminal activity. Neighbourhoods do vital crime prevention work every day in partnership with our authorities.

Our police services do incredible work in our communities, but the fact is that they are strained too, just as our correctional officers and parole and probation officers are. Too often, they become the first point of contact for individuals with mental health issues, because the existing resources are insufficient. Still, this government continues to cut funding to health care, and our services for mental health remain decades behind.

Fortunately for this government, our police services are picking up the slack. We know that in recent years, we have seen an increased focus on de-escalation and an increase in mental health awareness and training, but these are reactions they've been forced to make because this government has ignored the root causes.

Let's invest in strengthening our communities; let's build community partnerships; and let's work towards finding solutions.

As an example, as we've seen across the province, the abuse of fentanyl patches, a prescription medication that is an often-used opioid, is a growing concern. To address this problem in my community, the Durham Regional Police Service and the municipality teamed up with local pharmacies to develop the Patch for Patch program, to help prevent the non-prescription use of fentanyl.

I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize that the member from Nipissing has tackled this problem as well.

These types of forward-thinking community partnerships can save lives, they can make our communities safer and they can limit the strain on our justice and correctional systems. Speaker, that strain is reaching crisis levels. Over the past year, we have heard numerous stories of judges forced to change sentencing because of a lack of sufficient mental health services in our correctional facilities. This is on top of the system-wide overcrowding and understaffing that plagues our prisons. Simply put, this government has to do better.

We need to ensure that the first point of contact for individuals with mental illness is not our justice system. For the individuals that do end up in correctional facilities, we need to ensure that the ultimate goal is rehabilitation. We need more diversion programs for offenders to limit reoffences and allow them to become contributing members of society. We need better programming in our correctional facilities, so inmates can retrain, improve their education and reintegrate successfully in our community. These are complex issues, but we need to do better.

We're fortunate to have such incredible police officers, correctional officers, probation and parole officers and front-line services in this province, but we need to invest in forward-thinking policies and programs that will mitigate the strain on these services and help prevent crimes before they happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the select committee, entitled Inclusion and Opportunity: A New Path for Developmental Services in Ontario, was tabled in the Legislature on July 22, 2014;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That government of Ontario immediately review the final report and commence the implementation of the recommendations of the select committee, as contained in the final report."

Not surprisingly, I support this petition, because I was a member of that select committee. I will give it to page Marco to take to the table.

ACCIDENT BENEFITS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to acknowledge Mr. Gulamhussein for his work in making sure these petitions were signed. I have a petition today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

Whereas "the \$3,500 minor injury guideline cap is an insufficient amount of funds provided, since assessments on all patients are required to ensure their safe ability in performing tasks associated with attendant care, housekeeping, and caregiving. Furthermore, repetitive muscular strain as a result of performing household tasks daily can lead to chronic long-term impairment. Accidental slips/falls due to dizziness/vertigo can result in further injuries" involved ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:"

To remove the minor injury guideline "sections 18(1) and 18(2) from the Ontario Statutory Accident Benefits Schedule," and incorporate rebuttal examination reports back into the system.

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and provide it to page Shirley.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

1540

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to Victoria to bring down.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas life under this Liberal government has become more and more unaffordable;

"Whereas Ontarians' assets are already taxed multiple times throughout their lives;

"Whereas the Liberal government has raised taxes through new eco fees, a health tax, and increased income taxes multiple times;

"Whereas the death tax in Ontario is the highest of any province in Canada;

"Whereas the last thing a grieving family should worry about is the taxman at their door;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government repeal the estate administration tax immediately."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and I'll send it to the desk with page Julia.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I affix my name to this and give it to page Abby to deliver.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature, and give it to page Marco.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to present this petition that comes from my riding; more precisely, from Julie Rodrigue from Chelmsford in Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

"Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name and ask Michael to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to Vanessa to bring forward.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario families and businesses have seen their hydro costs more than triple under the Liberal government since 2003;

"Whereas the Liberal government's unaffordable Green Energy Act, the \$2 billion wasted on the smart meter program and the \$1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants will translate into a further 42% increase in hydro bills over five years;

"Whereas the Auditor General revealed that the Liberal government has collected approximately \$50 billion over the last decade through a global adjustment tax on hydro bills largely used to subsidize exorbitant green energy contracts;

"Whereas the Liberal government has allowed peak hydro rates to increase by 15% on May 1;

"Whereas the Liberal government's elimination of the clean energy benefit will mean an average increase in hydro bills of \$137 per year;

"Whereas the Liberal government's planned sale of a majority share of Hydro One will mean higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call on the Liberal government to protect Ontario families and businesses from further hydro increases by applying all proceeds from the sale of Hydro One to the \$27-billion electricity debt and imposing a moratorium on any new industrial wind and solar projects."

Brought to me by many residents of River Mill Village in Lindsay, I'll hand it to page Kyle.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that is signed by Mrs. Tammy Wheely from Hanmer in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care, and the emergency department...;

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

"Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Cameron to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This petition is titled "Planning for Ontario's Future."

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, that's a good one.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Yes, it is.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

1550

"Whereas the" previous "federal government" had "refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this. I will sign my name to it and I will hand it to page Victoria.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the select committee, entitled Inclusion and Opportunity: A New Path for Developmental Services in Ontario, was tabled in the Legislature on July 22, 2014;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That government of Ontario immediately review the final report and commence the implementation of the recommendations of the select committee, as contained in the final report."

As a member of the committee, I clearly support this petition. I affix my name to it and give it to page Nicole.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Ken Hill from Nairn Centre, which borders my riding and Algoma-Manitoulin. Half of it is mine; half of it is in Algoma-Manitoulin.

It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask my good page John to bring it to the Clerk.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act respecting Invasive Species / Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day. The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Speaker. I must say that yesterday was a banner day in the Leal household. Karan and I—our daughter, Shanae, was 16 years old yesterday. It was a wonderful day for our daughter. I know what you want me to do. I just wanted to give a little plug for the Leal family today.

I'm moving government order G109, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 29, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased to be able to pick up where I left off last week and finish the remaining time for some remarks with regard to second reading of Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Just to recap briefly what this bill is about, I'll just make a few comments about the other parts of the bill that I referenced last week. This bill, if passed, would

make a number of changes to workplace laws, including the labour relations provisions of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Section 1 of Bill 109 proposes changes to the labour relations provisions of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. This section of Bill 109 was drafted in consultation with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and so is supported by firefighters across the province. This bill includes important provisions that will assist municipalities that employ full-time firefighters who also serve as volunteer firefighters in other municipalities, the so-called double-hatters, as they will provide a measure of protection for the full-time position held by the double-hatter. The proposed change means the International Association of Fire Fighters will no longer be able to force its members who volunteer in composite departments—that is, professional full-time and double-hatter departments where there are also unionized full-time members—to stop doing so. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been requesting this change for years. In my opinion, this legalization of double-hatters is the best part of this bill.

Bill 109's proposed amendments to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act applies when the government restructures or amalgamates services. These changes provide that a vote to determine a new bargaining unit is not required if a prescribed percentage, at least more than 60% of employees in the bargaining unit, were previously represented by a single unit. This change will have the greatest impact on health services integrations such as those involving hospitals.

While I question the justification for many of these amendments, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union is adamant that these changes should not go ahead because they may take away the right of an employee to choose what labour union or bargaining unit they belong to. I would just say that personally I sympathize with their objection because these changes result in less choice for an employee, and as a Progressive Conservative, I believe in more choice.

But the remarks I want to make today centre more around the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. So I will look to the question of protecting workers from anecdotal-based allegations. This deals with claim suppression.

As I began describing last Thursday before my time was over, section 3 of Bill 109 would make a number of amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. The focus of these amendments is to stop claim suppression by employers and increasing death benefits to survivors.

The Workplace Injury Claim Suppression: Final Report, completed by the consulting group Prism, was used by the government as a rationale for this section of Bill 109. That report needs to be examined with this bill to assess the need for the changes proposed.

When we read Prism's report, we find that there is actually little evidence of claim suppression as a problem

in the workplace. Claim suppression is defined by Prism as "actions taken by an employer to induce a worker not to report an injury or illness or alternatively to under-report the severity of an injury or illness or the amount of lost time attributable to that injury or illness. The inducement may be coercive, i.e., the inducement may involve an actual or perceived threat of sanctions. Alternatively the inducement may be accommodating, i.e., the employer may offer the worker benefits in lieu of workers' compensation, if full WSIB benefits, especially lost time benefits, are not claimed."

1600

So an employer must "induce a worker not to report" or to "under-report" an injury to WSIB. I want to just jump in here and parenthetically insert a response by the construction employers council on WSIB. Here's just a brief moment of what they have to say. "Instead of celebrating a 45% reduction in the construction lost time injury rate over the last 10 years, such achievements are disbelieved as evidence of claim suppression. Enough." And that's what we're saying.

So an employer must "induce a worker" not to report or to under-report. But to induce a worker, the employer must have intent to do so, and this is where the report fails us. The Prism report fails to introduce a single motivation explaining this unlawful behaviour. "There is no strong evidence to support credible inferences on the motivation for claim suppression. Indeed, it is unlikely that conventional research methods could ever generate valid estimates of the incidence of claim suppression or incontestable accounts of the motivation for claim suppression."

The report's inflammatory conclusion is that "claim suppression appears to be a real problem." But at the same time, the report incredibly offers that "it is not feasible to develop even a weak estimate, let alone a credible estimate, of the incidence of employer-induced claim suppression."

The report also admits that "the survey evidence is too limited to support any plausible estimate of employer-induced claim suppression...." It seems, then, to me, that what we are looking at is trying to create a solution for a problem that doesn't exist.

The Prism report relies on anecdotes and a fundamental contradiction of the principle of innocence until proven guilty to support its conclusions. For these reasons, we should throw out the Prism report with regard to consideration of this bill. Its only use is to comment on the risk of claim suppression, not its actual prevalence.

It is clear to me and many others that this section of Bill 109 is solving a problem that does not exist. Worse, the maximum fine that could be imposed on a corporation found guilty of an offence would be increased from \$100,000 to \$500,000. Furthermore, a new administrative penalty may be applied by the Ontario Labour Relations Board up to any amount.

In summary, there is no justification for increasing the fine fivefold. Claim suppression is already an offence

under the WSIA. Add to this picture Prism's unfounded conclusions, and then we must ask ourselves: Why does this bill deal with the issue of claim suppression at all?

The final thing I would like to comment on is that I was at least underwhelmed with the Minister of Labour's introductory speech on this bill. His speech was nine minutes. The minister had the opportunity to speak for up to an hour to explain the purposes of the bill and the rationale for its proposed changes. Given the breadth of the bill and its potential impacts, I am disappointed that the government minister failed to enlighten the members of this House on the true nature of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to rise again and speak to Bill 109, a bit of an omnibus bill that amends the Labour Relations Act for the firefighters to bring them under the same protections that almost every other worker in this province is able to enjoy. It also amends the WSIB act around a number of issues, claim suppression being one of them, which has, in my experience in the health care sector, been a huge issue over probably the last 20 years, where we saw hospital employers and other employers in the health care sector actually getting huge rebates—experience-rating rebates—while at the same time they were suppressing hundreds of claims of nurses in this province.

I think it's particularly important, in light of the fact that so many nurses are being assaulted in the workplace—more than 700 in the last seven or eight years. I think it's very important that employers are actually penalized when they do not put claims in for nurses and all other workers in this province.

The last piece is with regard to the PSLRTA legislation—the poison pill, as I call it—which was introduced into this bill and that the NDP do not support because it takes away a basic democracy: the right to vote for a union of your choice. This bill would allow for no vote where a union has more than 60% of the workers in a forced amalgamation or merger in a municipality, in the health care sector or at the schools level. I think it's really an affront to democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm happy to speak about Bill 109, which would actually amend three separate acts affecting workers, to increase fairness and efficiency: We have the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act.

Coming from a long line of firefighters, I would like to use my brief time to talk about the amendments to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. My dad, who just passed away this summer, used to drive the trucks here in Yorkville, in Toronto, for many years, as did my uncles. His brothers were also firefighters in Toronto, in Scarborough, as well.

Our government is very committed to supporting firefighters. These are very brave men and women who

selflessly put their lives in danger every day to ensure the rest of us are safe. I see that first-hand in Pickering-Scarborough East. I had the honour to recently attend a firefighter retirement dinner, as well as their award and recognition night.

But back to the bill: The amendments we are proposing would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act and provide additional tools to resolve disputes and reduce the need to seek remedies through the courts. That sounds like a good way to go. Specifically, they'll enhance the act by adding key legislative provisions already covered and provided in the Labour Relations Act, things like unfair labour practice protections; expedited grievance arbitration; union security and related provisions; religious objections; an authority to enforce all provisions under part IV, I believe, of the act; the power of an arbitrator to enforce a written settlement of a grievance; and the ability of the parties to file an arbitration decision in the Superior Court of Justice and have it enforced as an order of that court. It goes on, Speaker.

I'm very pleased to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to recognize the member from York-Simcoe. As always, she shares very thoughtful comments on legislation—

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's due. With respect specifically to Bill 109, I appreciated how she touched on the fact that this bill needs to happen because it includes important provisions that will assist municipalities that employ full-time firefighters who also serve as volunteer firefighters in other municipalities. I'm glad she brought that up, because in terms of recognition where it's due, our colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills first spoke about this, Speaker, over a decade ago. And it just goes to show you how this government slowly comes around to good ideas.

The thing that frustrates me, though, is—

Ms. Laurie Scott: The spring bear hunt was good.

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Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The spring bear hunt is another concept.

That said, we have to recognize that this government has become very much entrenched in speedy legislation.

Not only did the member from York-Simcoe recognize the importance of this bill, but she recognized and was quite blunt and straight-up in saying she was underwhelmed by the minister and his comments when he first introduced this. He spoke less than nine minutes, Speaker. That's unacceptable. There are elements of this bill that have been long overdue. As I mentioned, with regard to double-hatters, our colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills introduced this over a decade ago, and yet the minister still chose to speak less than nine minutes on a very, very important piece of legislation that earmarks a lot of requests. For instance, AMO, the Association of

Municipalities of Ontario, has been requesting the double-hatter change for years. Finally, it's happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to be able to rise in the House and follow the remarks from the member from York-Simcoe. Unfortunately, I was able to only listen to the last 10 minutes of her remarks because I wasn't in the House for the first 10. Although I disagree with her on some points, I always appreciate that she follows a reasoned thought process and actually gives reasons. It's not just empty rhetoric, and I really appreciate that.

There are parts of this bill that we are very supportive of. It always amazes me with government, specifically this government, why they don't just put like legislation into a bill and we have a good debate about it. If it was a good bill, it would pass without the rancour. It's a majority government; they don't need to do all the twisting and turning which they do.

This bill is another good example of a couple of pieces of good legislation which we support. We support the part about the firefighters. The part about WSIB: Every person in this House has had big issues trying to help constituents with WSIB.

But then they have to turn around and put the undemocratic part in, where you can't choose who to belong to if you want to belong to a union. Really, does that fit with the other? Remember grade 1 class, when you saw the blocks—which block doesn't fit? One of those blocks doesn't fit.

Unfortunately, that's something this government has done over and over and over: Instead of just trying to provide good, sound legislation, they always try to stick a poison pill in it. That's one of the big problems in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from York-Simcoe for final comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I certainly appreciate the comments made by the member from Welland, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member for Huron-Bruce and the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

At the very beginning of my speech, I talked about the limitations that are placed on us, as legislators, when you put different items into one bill. Parties on all sides have done this in government, so I'm not blaming; it's just an issue.

Clearly, as you listen to the comments made by those in the room, we all support the idea of making those changes for the double-hatters. It was a big issue in my riding because each of my municipalities had a mixed component of full-time firefighters and double-hatters. So it's certainly something whose time has come.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes.

The question of the union of choice: I made a comment at the time, and I certainly agree with the member from Welland.

Just concluding in the last few seconds: Clearly, our support is in the direction of the changes that have been

made to the firefighters, and the question around things like claim suppression are issues that we have strong feelings about and that there are limitations to the evidence to support an initiative that would make it even more draconian.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this bill, Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. I want to first commend my colleague the member from Welland, our labour critic, who has done really a wonderful job in highlighting our thoughts on this bill: some of its shortcomings and, also, some of the positive aspects of the bill that we certainly can be supportive of. That's what I will attempt to do in my 20-minute speech here today and, hopefully, raise a couple of points to which we haven't given much thought, or any thought, as of yet.

This is an omnibus bill of the like we've seen in this House before. That means, for viewers tuning in right now, that it is a piece of legislation that encompasses various acts unrelated to one another. They wrap it all into one nice tidy bill and hope that nobody pays that much attention. However, thankfully, we have an effective opposition here in the NDP and we certainly do our due diligence in examining what the government is trying to push through this place as a majority government and what their intentions are. Sometimes, we don't know what their intentions are because, sometimes, we think they don't even know what their intentions are. It is hard to figure out. I'll point to one aspect that I can't figure out quite yet: what the solution is that they're trying to find a problem for. But we'll touch on that in a little bit.

Speaker, the bill amends three bills: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997—commonly known as the PSLRTA Act; and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997—the WSIA. The first schedule is the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. This mirrors provisions and protections in the Labour Relations Act by preventing unfair labour practices, interference with representation, intimidation of employees, membership in associations, expedited rights of arbitration—similar to section 49 of the Labour Relations Act—and a clear process by which complaints can be brought to the OLRB and modifications that take into account the unique natures of firefighters' labour relations.

Let's expand on that. What does that mean in real English? It means bringing firefighters under the umbrella of the Ontario Labour Relations Act, something which most of us would think would be quite common sense. They perform a role. They are certainly unique in that role, but ultimately, they are workers. They are public service workers who provide an invaluable service, and I certainly want to commend the men and women who serve as full-time, volunteer and part-time firefighters in our communities. They keep us safe. They

run in when we run out, and for that they are to be commended.

It is, of course, our duty to ensure that they have the protections that they afford us—at least those types of protections at the very minimum. On our side, as New Democrats, we've attempted to extend protections for firefighters and first responders. My colleague Cheri DiNovo, the member for Parkdale—High Park, has introduced several times—I think four times—a bill that would extend PTSD support for our first responders, those who again, as I said, rush in when we are running out. We ask them to do a job and to see things that we cannot see, that we do not want to see. We ask them to perform a public service in a professional way that many of those among us just wouldn't be able to do. For that, we have to acknowledge that when we send them into harm's way, there's a chance that they may be harmed, not simply physically, but also emotionally and psychologically. That being said, Speaker, we have to ensure that we are affording them the protections. Unfortunately, that hasn't seen the light of day yet.

On this side, as opposition members, we have to question the government's priorities in what they actually legislate and bring forward on the order paper. The amendments to the OLRA bringing firefighters under the umbrella of the OLRA are a step forward. We certainly appreciate that and I know that firefighters and municipalities appreciate that, as well. However, there is so much more that can be done. It begs the question, why not deal with those issues in a stand-alone bill that deals specifically with our first responders and our fire services? They would certainly appreciate that. It's been a long time coming and I would assume that it would receive all-party support. We have seen all-party support for that type of bill before in this place. However, again, it doesn't make the list of high priorities when it comes to the Liberal government's legislative agenda.

1620

So, again, the schedule under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act deals with what has been a contentious issue over the years, and one that I've learned about since being elected: the double-hatter issue, where firefighters are also volunteering or working in other jurisdictions and providing that same service. It has been a contentious issue between municipalities and between firefighting associations, but I think there is a balance that is struck here that everyone can live with. We certainly look forward to hearing more about that at the committee stage. So that's the first part of this bill.

As I said, this is an omnibus bill. Let's talk about the other section that it deals with. It's the public sector—no, let's go to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. That's the second section that it deals with: the WSIA, which is the act that governs our WSIB system, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, which was previously known as the workers' compensation and insurance board, one that I think in years past had an emphasis on compensation. That's what the system was supposed to be. It actually acknowledged that if you were

a worker in the province of Ontario, you paid into the WSIB as a deduction off your pay. That was the insurance that would be provided to you should anything occur throughout your working career, whether you were injured on the job as an acute injury or whether you sustained or developed an occupational disease. It was the compensation system, and it had some faults; there's no question about it. It has been an evolving process over the years. But I can tell you that I know from, I guess, a little bit of institutional knowledge from my mom having been a constituency assistant for a former MPP that they did a lot of work on comp claims and they helped out a lot of people. Sometimes they actually acted as adjudicators and representatives for those workers.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, my mom did that. They did a lot of claims. We don't do that anymore out of our MPP offices. We're not working in tandem and appealing at the board level. We just don't have the resources. Why? Because there are so many claims that come through our office now, through the WSIB, that it would be impossible for our constituency staff to take on that burden. We would have to have a staff of 20 people in each constituency office to deal with the level of WSIB claims that come through.

There are glaring faults and failures in the system that have been clearly highlighted and articulated, including through the Arthurs report of 2012 that looked at the issue of deeming, the issue of the unfunded liability, the issue of how to figure that out and how to address those issues. The Arthurs report made several recommendations. Actually, it made many, many recommendations, and to this day, since 2012, none of those recommendations have even been initiated. However, today we see—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What? Not one?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Not one. Can you imagine? Not one. But we do see a couple here that are highlighted.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What have the Liberals been doing?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What have they been doing? Well, not much on the WSIB file.

Some of the key amendments that are included under this schedule, schedule 3 under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, are the appointment of a Fair Practices Commissioner to serve as an ombudsman of the WSIB who would have the full authority to investigate complaints and make recommendations—not a moment too soon, in my opinion.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Elizabeth Witmer. That's what they—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, that's one thing that they did do: They appointed Elizabeth Witmer as a chair of the WSIB. That hasn't resulted in that much positive change, at least from the perspective of injured workers. Life has not gotten better since she has been sitting in the chair, although there are some indications they are starting to listen to injured workers' groups, many of which I've met with over the years.

Certainly there are advocates out there who have fought long and hard for changes to the WSIA, and not

only changes for themselves as injured workers, but for families of injured workers who have had to endure really difficult circumstances when they have lost a spouse or gone down to one income earner or no income. It causes an enormous amount of trauma. I want to certainly applaud their efforts in at least bringing these types of provisions about, because we know they've had a huge role in doing that.

The Fair Practices Commissioner, as an ombudsman of the WSIB—I welcome that type of role, somebody who can come in and actually assess whether the practices under the WSIB are being effectively and fairly implemented. We know that it is a difficult and sometimes all-too-common interaction between WSIB and injured workers. Secondly, there are provisions against claim suppression. So it provides procedural provisions against claim suppression.

Speaker, what is claim suppression? Let's say you step off the chair as you're leaving today, and you trip and fall and twist your ankle. You know what? You're injured. It's rare that we see injuries in this line of work, but they do occur unexpectedly. Imagine if members of this House said, "Well, listen, even though those stairs might not have been adequately sized; maybe they might have been out of whack and maybe you might have hit a loose board or the carpet is a little loose there—even though that might have happened, don't file a claim. Keep your injury to yourself. Stay quiet. We're just going to sit you in the back of the members' gallery. We'll bring you some cookies and coffee. You just take it easy for a little while until you're back up on your feet." Speaker, that is claim suppression, when an employer would say, "Don't report your injury because we don't want it to go onto our claim and affect our WSIA rating." That is something that happens, again, all too often.

Here we see that the government has addressed that or is attempting to address that by expressly prohibiting employers from suppressing claims, which they should be doing as it is now, directly or indirectly. If employers are found guilty of claim suppression, they could be fined up to \$500,000 versus the \$100,000 threshold currently. I think that's welcome. I wonder if it will send a signal that will reverberate throughout the workplaces in Ontario covered under the WSIB or WSIA.

Is it enough? I hope so, because each and every day, workers get injured, workers develop occupational disease and workers are killed in this province, and we are not doing enough. We have not done enough, at least since I've been here. I know, historically, injured workers' groups have advocated for more to be done through the government—more heightened inspection, more awareness, increased fines. There is so much more that we could do to ensure that no worker has to go home in a body bag, and that's as grim as it is. There are workers who don't make it home at the end of the day, and it is our obligation to do everything we can to avoid that and to make sure there are no occupational deaths in the province.

So those are two schedules that New Democrats certainly can support. We look forward to discussing

them at committee, and we look forward to hearing testimony from stakeholders who have brought those about, because I would have to give some credit—these aren't ideas that are novel to the government. These are things that have been floating around throughout labour circles for 20 years, certainly, and have been waiting for a government—any government—to address. So we certainly support that.

Speaker, as the government is prone to do from time to time, they throw what would be a good bill—they throw a contentious aspect in what would normally be an uncontroversial bill, and I speak specifically of schedule 2 in Bill 109.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Poison pill.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a poison pill. It's been referred to as that by many members in this House, certainly on our side. It's the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997, the PSLRTA.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Mike Harris.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mike Harris.

The changes under the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act really boil down to this: There's a transition, there's a merger happening. Whether it be in the hospital, municipal or school board sectors, two entities come together with maybe a host of bargaining units, CUPE, OPSEU, ONA—who knows, right? But different sectors and different workers could be represented and most often are represented by different bargaining units—different unions. What the government is saying now is that once those mergers occur, if one of those units holds 60% of the bargaining unit in that certain workplace post-merger, if they represent 60% of the workers that are organized and currently unionized, then they would not be required to have a vote to merge all of the workers. They would then just automatically suck up all of those outstanding members that belong to a different bargaining unit.

1630

Now, what is the thought around there? Do you think you're going to save money? Do you think you're going to save time? Because what you're actually doing is finding a problem to a solution that already exists. We have fair, free collective bargaining. What I think you will be doing as a government is immediately initiating a charter challenge by all of the groups that are involved in bargaining units under these sectors.

We already know that that has happened. It happened through a decision of the Supreme Court, through the RCMP. There was a case that found that section 2(d) of the charter guarantees "a meaningful process of collective bargaining," which includes "a process that provides employees with a degree of choice and independence sufficient to enable them to determine their collective interests and meaningfully pursue them." A summary of the case can be easily found.

This is not a priority either through those bargaining units or through the entities that are involved in them. It's not a priority that they're asking the government to address. We are wondering what the rationale is. There

has been only one vote in 2009 and one in 2010—sorry, 2014 and 2015. I want to thank my colleague for providing me with some good notes to reference. There have only been two votes: in 2014 and in 2015. That is not an enormous amount of labour activity to actually warrant having to throw this aspect in there—one that is wholly undemocratic, one that takes away the charter rights of an organized, represented individual to at least vote on who they want to represent them.

It may not even be that the larger unit, given that they would hold the largest numbers in that organization—it may not be that they even win the vote. It may be that that representation might need to change after years, that they have been represented. So let's leave those unions with the ability and the obligation to make their case, to sell their product, to sell their representation, to talk to those members and to discuss what they can do as a representative. That's how it goes—that's how it should go. There is nothing wrong with that process. It doesn't cause any more strife than any other process.

The government seemingly is attempting to streamline that by—and the only way that they can figure out how to do that is to remove the democratic right of those workers to decide by themselves, through their own volition. We can't support that. We would never support something that removes the democratic right to choose your representation at work, and we certainly wouldn't get into a charter challenge and a battle with labour unions in the province of Ontario. That just doesn't make sense to us. It's a waste of time, it's a waste of a provision of a bill, and we would love the government to take a second look at it. Remove that aspect, and then we can pass this bill and see some good, positive steps go forward in the House. Again, it boggles the mind why they would want to do that and ruin what would seemingly be a modestly effective bill.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: So they can say we voted against the bill.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I guess maybe that is the politics. I should be a little bit more astute than that. Thank you. The politics is that they will go out and shop it around and say, "Look, the NDP voted against a labour bill. It did all of these great things, and they voted against it." Well, come on, give us a little bit more credit than that. Those who are involved in these sectors understand and are a little bit more savvy than that, to think that you're going to play politics, especially with the NDP on a labour bill. It's just not going to fly.

We will do our due diligence, we will do what's fair and we will ensure that there's a balance struck in the bill. That's what we do. That's how we go about it. My, oh, my, wouldn't it be nice if that was the focus of the government more often than not?

Speaker, it's always a pleasure to speak in this House. I do appreciate the privilege that it is, on behalf of my riding of Essex. I thank the members for their attention and I look forward to hearing thoughts and comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened to the member from Essex for his, I think, very thoughtful presentation. He was certainly very informative and he feels very strongly about certain parts of this bill.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is no bill that is perfect. That's why we continually have bills before us. As I've said before, the only perfect bills are presented in North Korea. They have wonderful bills there all the time. But here we're imperfect, so we try to improve things in Ontario.

I know that the member stressed the importance of having proper legislation to protect the rights of unions and unionized workers. This does that with the Fair Practices Commissioner and some amendments to the Labour Relations Act to include firefighters.

But, you know, the majority of workers I run into that have the most problems are ones who are not members of unions. They are people who work for minimum wage jobs, on the margins, who are just working to essentially survive. Many of them are newcomers to Canada who will take any job, and many of them are not treated fairly when it comes to being injured on the job, especially, and getting their pay or survivors' benefits. I know I'm dealing with a case right now in terms of survivors' benefits because there is a lot of off-book nonsense that goes on with these small employers.

So we also have to look at protecting the rights of those individuals who don't have a union. If they have a union, wonderful, but if they don't, they also need to get protection. In this act, there are protections in terms of survivor's benefits and workplace safety, and not to suppress injuries, because that is another very common complaint that I have: employers trying to suppress injuries in the workplace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to stand and comment on the member's 20-minute speech on Bill 109.

There are three aspects of this bill that are important, but for me, serving the riding of Dufferin–Caledon, I will focus my remarks very specifically on the allowance in this legislation that will ensure that young people who want to volunteer in our fire departments are able to do so.

I once described to the minister at the time that these individuals who are volunteering in our local departments are actually the farm team. That is where employers go and try to find and hire new firefighters, new professional firefighters, full-time firefighters. The fact that those people want to return to their home community, give back and continue the ability to volunteer in their own community through these volunteer departments, I think, is commendable. I'm absolutely thrilled that it has been incorporated into the proposal in Bill 109.

I won't speculate as to how long this legislation will take to get through the process, but I'd hope that we don't spend too much time drawing this out, because, as other colleagues have mentioned, it is an issue that has plagued smaller communities, communities that are

served by volunteer fire departments, for literally decades. It does us no service to have that issue continue to drag out. So I'm pleased to see that in Bill 109 and I hope we can get that in and passed relatively quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to stand and bring the voice of my constituents from Windsor West to the debate. I know I only have two minutes. Later on this afternoon, I'll have 20, so I'll have plenty to say.

I'll touch on just a few things.

1640

The member from Essex really drove home the real issue with the bill, which is that we have some really good legislation in place when it comes to firefighters. I think everybody in this room can appreciate the work that firefighters do on a daily basis, not just in their role as firefighters, as far as going and putting out fires or showing up at accident scenes or what have you, but beyond that: the fact that they go out into the community, they give back to the community; they help educate some of our youngest members of our communities about fire safety as well as some other safety issues; they do fundraisers and give back to non-profit organizations in their communities.

So I think we can all appreciate the work that firefighters do, and we certainly want to make sure that they are recognized and respected, and this bill takes it in that direction.

Unfortunately, what it also does is, by having the other issues in there around unions and organizing, as far as two unions merging and such, it muddies the waters and it ends up pitting firefighters against the rest of the unions. I'm certain that is not what the firefighters want to see. It's very unfortunate that that's what has happened, and I think it needs to be separated.

In the 25 seconds I have left, I just wanted to mention: The member from Eglinton–Lawrence had mentioned protecting the employees who live on the margins, those who are low-income earners, and making sure they're protected. I'd like to point out that the government side has actually attacked some of the lowest-income people within the education sector by saying that they're going to dock their wages for withdrawing voluntary services. So I'm not really sure that the government side really believes what the member from Eglinton–Lawrence just said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 109 today.

Actually, like my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Services, I was pleased, a week or so ago, to attend the Guelph version of the annual firefighters' retirement dinner. So I thought I'd speak a bit about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act amendments that are in Bill 109. They actually apply to all workers; for example, strengthening the right of the worker to file a

claim for all workers if they're injured on the job, and an increase in the maximum corporate penalty that could be applied if a business didn't hold up their side of what they're supposed to do under the act.

The third thing that I wanted to talk about, really, is a particular issue for firefighters, although it's often an issue in other cases, and that's the whole area of chronic diseases and occupational disease. What often happens is, particularly with cancers, where you've been exposed to some chemical, for example, through your work as a firefighter—there's often a very long latency period, so that by the time the disease manifests itself, by the time the disease has been diagnosed, the person has often been retired for a very long time and really doesn't have any significant income. If that person, unfortunately, dies due to their disease, the act needs some updating to make sure that the calculation for the survivors' benefits is not based on the low income in the retirement low-income phase of employment, but is actually based on the average salary of people who are currently employed in the similar profession.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Essex for his final comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Dufferin–Caledon, Windsor West and the Minister of Education.

I thank the Minister of Education for bringing up a point that I forgot to touch on, that aspect of survivor benefits. Indeed, it is an accurate and an adequate response to what has been a lingering problem, in terms of folks who have suffered occupational diseases that have a long latency period and changing the calculation so that it's based on the average salary of that work. So that's a good thing. One of the things that I hope the government considers is removing the retroactivity portion of it, dating back to 1998. There are, as the minister referenced, chronic and occupational diseases that have a longer latency period than that. What happens to those people who received or were given that diagnosis in 1997? They're left out of this. That's something the government should consider. It would go a long way to supporting those families who have been struggling and fighting for adequate survivor benefits under the WSIB, which they deserve.

Again, I'm very happy to see some action taking place on the part of injured workers and their families and some attention being given to firefighters and adding a level playing field to their profession.

However, the one aspect under the labour transition—I forget the acronym. We have to look at the overall democracy of that provision and factor in, are we heading down a slippery slope if we eliminate the democratic right of workers to decide who bargains for them?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's always a pleasure to stand in my place. Today, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Brampton–Springdale, the member for Cambridge and the member for Ajax–Pickering. I'm

delighted to rise on behalf of my constituents and speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act.

Increasing fairness for all workers is something all of us here today can support, and the changes proposed by this important bill do just that. By amending three separate acts—the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act—we can directly impact the fairness and efficiency that workers experience in their workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak for all of us when I say that the firefighters in our communities all across Ontario are modern-day heroes. In fact, just last week I had the pleasure of attending our volunteer firefighter recognition evening in our community, and in a few weeks' time I will be attending our annual banquet that celebrates the contribution of our Burlington firefighters. Day after day, they risk their lives to keep us safe, whether it be in our homes or on the road, where accidents can and do happen at any moment. These brave men and women dedicate their lives to protecting ours, and the least we can do in return is ensure that they have a fair and equitable workplace.

The proposed amendments to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act in this bill would add new provisions, similar to those already found in the Labour Relations Act, designed to protect firefighters from such things as unfair labour practices, having their bargaining rights interfered with, or being intimidated or coerced by their employer. These valuable members of our community work hard enough at their jobs without having to worry about their collective rights, as well.

We must also protect workers' rights more broadly, and Bill 109 provides greater safeguards to all workers in Ontario. Every employee in this province has the right to file a WSIB claim, and it is our responsibility to ensure that this right is protected and maintained. Some employers engage in claim suppression, which is, of course, absolutely inappropriate, as the member from Essex noted earlier; and I absolutely agree. The proposed changes under this bill would protect workers and prosecute employers who engage in these pernicious practices.

Injured workers are often left vulnerable in these conditions, and we must do what we can to make sure that no employer can take advantage of them in these situations.

Unfortunately, there are also cases when a worker may pay the ultimate price and the survivors of work-related death are left to cope on their own. Under the new amendments, survivor benefits would be calculated based on the average earnings of an individual employed in the same profession as the deceased worker. The significance of this change will directly affect the benefits payable to the families of workers who passed away of a work-related illness that manifested after their retirement. Many illnesses can take years to develop, often presenting symptoms well after individuals have been removed

from the conditions which caused them. It would be unfair to base the compensation for their families on their post-retirement incomes.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, Bill 109 will protect the workers of the province and their families in times when they may need it most.

The final component of this bill is related to amalgamations of schools, hospitals or municipalities. This bill would remove the redundant vote in those situations when two unions, by necessity, amalgamate as well and one union has a clear, large majority. This will reduce delays and costs associated with a vote and result in smoother transitions and take some tension out of labour relations.

1650

Bill 109 is, in the end, simply about protecting the rights of workers in Ontario, whether it is providing tools to firefighters to help resolve disputes, ensuring smoother transitions in the public sector or just making sure that our workers' compensation system is fair. Bill 109 goes a long way in establishing protections for employees across all sectors and all of our communities. Our government is committed to making sure that Ontario is the safest, fairest and simply the best province to work in in Canada. This is just another example of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing the debate, the member from Brampton—Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to join my colleagues to speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. As has been pointed out during previous debate, this is an extensive bill bringing together three acts: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997. Each of these bills was new legislation 18 years ago, in 1997. Times have changed since 1997, so it's time to make amendments that will ensure the legislation continues to meet the needs of those they govern.

Our government is committed to providing increased fairness to all workers across Ontario. Bill 109 proposes to strengthen protections, enhance compensation and ensure that broader public sector transitions are allowed to go as smoothly as possible while still balancing the democratic rights of workers.

It is a sad fact that in Ontario too many are struggling to make ends meet. In my own riding of Brampton—Springdale, I meet with hard-working people who want only to put in an honest day's work in order to bring home a paycheque to contribute to or to support their family. They struggle to find employment, and when they do, they feel vulnerable and insecure, wanting to ensure that they do a good job so as not to lose it and to fit in.

It angers me when I hear of employers who convince, perhaps even threaten, their employees in order to prevent unsafe workplaces or accidents on the job from being reported to WSIB. One of the issues that Bill 109 addresses is to ensure that workers are aware of their rights to file a WSIB claim and that their right is

protected. If passed, Bill 109 will inhibit employers from taking any action that might discourage a worker from filing a claim or not following through with a claim to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The penalties to employers who do try to break their obligation to keep employees safe or provide adequate compensation if they are injured will be increased under Bill 109 as well. Corporate penalties of \$10,000 to \$500,000 will be levied upon a conviction of an offence under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. This will bring the penalties in line with the maximum fines for corporations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We need to do everything we can to ensure that employees are getting the support they need and to ensure questionable relations between employers and their employees are not allowed to happen.

Every employee must have the right to speak up if they see or experience an unsafe situation or practice. No one should worry when they leave for work in the morning whether they will return home or not. Another amendment in Bill 109, if passed, would be to mandate the WSIB board of directors to appoint an organizational ombudsperson, a Fair Practices Commissioner who will be independent, neutral and a confidential resource for injured workers as well as for employers and service providers. The Fair Practices Commissioner's services could include not only looking into individual complaints but also tracing complaint patterns, identifying system-wide issues within an organization and recommending improvements to WSIB itself.

Mr. Speaker, safety in the workplace is a very important issue, and one that is not automatic. That is what Bill 109 is addressing: the all-encompassing issue of people who do get hurt on the job and ensuring that they have access to the support they need. Identifying unsafe situations and practices is one thing; however, there are parts that must be considered—an air quality problem or a work procedure that causes an injury that is not apparent right away.

I know that it has been discussed several times by members during the debate that relates to this bill, but it's hard not to mention our professional firefighters, volunteer firefighters and other first responders. Not only do they face danger every day and endure injuries on the job, but there is a frightening realization of the cancers that develop, for many being diagnosed after they have retired. In situations where a worker dies of an occupational disease and has no or lower earnings at the time of the diagnosis because they are retired, the WSIB's current operational practice is to calculate survivor benefits based on whichever is greater: the average amount of annual earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade when the disease was contracted, or the worker's annual earnings in the year prior to their diagnosis. If passed, Bill 109 would allow the WSIB to continue this practice under the law rather than the statutory minimum currently allowed under the WSIA.

The men and women who give so much to us, running into fires while we are running out, deserve to be taken

care of. The proposed changes in Bill 109 are long overdue, and I believe they have been introduced in a way that all Ontarians will understand as a fair way to make amendments. It's a balanced and responsible way to proceed. There is little doubt that, when passed, Bill 109 will save lives in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing with debate, the member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and add a few comments to today's debate regarding Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I know that our government's Bill 109 strengthens protections for workers while supporting businesses. There are three acts that are being amended by this bill, as stated by my colleagues: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. I know that if these amendments are passed in the bill, it would increase fairness and efficiency for all workers across Ontario.

I wanted to spend a few minutes, Speaker, if I may, just on the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Certainly all of us are very well aware of the job that firefighters do, day in and day out, not only to protect the public, but the risk that they have because of their job. I always like to say about our firefighters that if a fire or an emergency situation develops, they run towards the danger whereas we as the general public, and my family generally, tend to run away; and I commend all firefighters for the job they do, each and every day, protecting us.

The amendments to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act and provide additional tools not only to resolve disputes but to reduce the need to seek remedies through the court. Although there are examples that my colleagues have referenced—unfair labour practice protections, expedited grievance arbitration, union security and related provisions etc.—I really did want to focus for a few minutes on the hazards that firefighters have on the job, and these are especially the health hazards.

Interestingly, I have several friends who are firefighters. My son is a fire ranger up in the north, in Timmins; he's a fire ranger during the summer. And what's interesting to me, because I have sometimes had to attend, as a former emergency room nurse, to some of these firefighters in my work in the past to sort of help fix them up after an incident. What I remember in particular is that the firefighters say that if they've been involved in a fire, no matter whether—they're all wearing their personal protective gear, but their skin smells of that fire, whether it's plastics or a smoke smell, for sometimes up to three days. The reason is that the skin is our largest organ, and a lot of those toxins are actually absorbed through the skin. Sometimes, two to three days go by, and no matter how many showers they have, no matter how many baths they soak in, they are still smelling of that fire.

That's the essence of the problem of the latent cancers that crop up later on. The toxins are super-heated, absorbed through their skin, and then they sit latently and cause these occupational health hazards later. So I know that we have done this profession a service by adding some of their occupational-health-related cancers to the list of those that they can be compensated for, but there is still certainly more that needs to be done. I'm very proud that we will be taking this forward to ensure that those firefighters, even into retirement age, will be able to have the benefits that they so deserve.

1700

I wanted to spend a few minutes also on the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. In my job as an emerg nurse at one time, I used to be the first person triaging and helping to treat workers who came in from their job sites, whether it was a nail in the foot or a fall off the ladder or other things that were certainly much more traumatic.

I really got used to dealing with the initial claim forms and making sure that the workers knew, right at the time of triage and their emerg visit, that they needed to keep all of their records going forward, to be able to ensure that they got the benefits that they so deserved. I often heard, sometimes later, of workers who got the first letter and, even though we had faxed all the documents in, they didn't get service right away. Although that has been getting better, workers really do need to be informed of their rights.

It worries me sometimes when I do hear of corporations and workplaces that are suppressing claims and saying, "Well, I don't want to send this claim. We'll send you off to the emergency department. You get fixed up and come back." That worries me, and I really do believe that this bill will help to do this, especially when we're looking at an increase in a maximum corporate penalty for a conviction for an offence under the WSIA from \$10,000 to \$500,000. I think this will send a signal to all workplaces that they are always involved in ensuring that we do have claims for and the ability to assist workers in their injuries.

I'm going to stop there and, in conclusion, just say I really do support Bill 109. I think it's in line with our government's commitment to the people of Ontario, by strengthening protections for workers while supporting business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing debate, the member from Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to commence the process on Bill 109, following the members from Burlington, Brampton–Springdale and Cambridge.

If passed, Bill 109 would amend three separate acts affecting workers, to increase fairness and efficiency. These acts are the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997.

Changes under this bill would, if they become law, provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario.

This would be done by providing more tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector; ensuring that broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible, through greater efficiency and stability; and helping to provide a fair, just and efficient workers' compensation system.

I took some Buckley's just before I started this. It's not quite working yet.

Strengthening protections for workers while supporting business is part of our government's plan to build Ontario up. Bill 109 is one more example of our commitment to the people of Ontario.

In summary of Bill 109, particularly the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, our government is committed to protecting Ontario firefighters, the brave men and women who selflessly put their lives in danger each and every day to ensure that the rest of us are safe.

The amendments we are proposing, if passed, would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act and provide additional tools to resolve disputes, reducing the need to seek remedies through the courts.

Specifically, the amendments would enhance the FPPA by adding very similar key legislative provisions already covered and provided for in the Labour Relations Act, 1995. A few examples of this are things like the unfair labour practice protections; expedited grievance arbitration; union security and related provisions; religious objections; Ontario Labour Relations Board authority to enforce all provisions under part IX of the FPPA; the power of an arbitrator to enforce a written settlement of a grievance, and the ability of the parties to file an arbitration decision in the Superior Court of Justice and have it enforced as an order of that court; and finally, the power of the Ontario Labour Relations Board to grant interim orders.

Our firefighters sacrifice so much to help keep Ontarians safe, and we are grateful for all the work they do. In return, it's up to us to ensure that they too are protected. They deserve to be protected. Firefighters deserve and should have these rights and protections afforded by the Labour Relations Act.

Under the WSIA—I'm sure I won't finish all of this—Bill 109 would provide greater safeguards to all workers in the province, through making changes in the Workplace Safety and Insurance act. These amendments, if passed, would do four main things, the first being to ensure that workers know it's their right to file a WSIB claim and that this right will be protected. If passed, the bill will prohibit employers from taking any action against a worker with the intent of discouraging the worker from filing a claim or influencing a worker to withdraw or abandon a claim for benefits for work-related injuries or illness within the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, WSIB.

I will continue on the WSIA. If passed, this bill would increase penalties from \$10,000 to \$500,000, which is consistent with maximum fines for corporations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

If passed, the bill would also provide greater fairness for survivors in cases of work-related death.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I should wrap this up, Mr. Speaker, in one sentence, by saying that these proposed changes are about providing increased fairness to workers across the province by strengthening protections.

Thank you for the flexibility and the opportunity to address this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope they give Joe time to do the two-minute wrap-up because he certainly deserves it.

Anyway, I want to thank the Speaker for the opportunity to put a couple of minutes here on Bill 109. I hope I get the opportunity to speak to it in a more comprehensive way—perhaps a 20-minute rotation; maybe only a 10. But I see Lucas under there already conspiring. Maybe the guillotine is going to come down on this bill, as well. We'll have to see.

My God, I'm down to a minute and 27 seconds. I want to talk about the double-hatter issue. This is what I want to commend the government on. I think they've done something very positive. That's been an issue since before I got here. When I was running for election here in 2003, Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, was one of the people I got in touch with, to talk about his fight to make double-hatters legal here in the province of Ontario. It's one that's gone on for some time. This will actually make that possible, so that a person who is employed in one firefighting group somewhere in the province can also volunteer in a volunteer fire department in the place where they live.

In my opinion, it was never an issue about safety, and I think the government has recognized this. So many of these people wanted to avail themselves of the opportunity to give back, on a volunteer basis, to the communities they actually live in. Plus, those departments can benefit tremendously from the expertise of a person who does this professionally, for a living. So I think it's a win-win situation.

There are other aspects of the bill—as I say, I hope I get the chance to speak to it in a more comprehensive way. I don't know that I will because I know what goes on in that corner office up on the second floor, but if I do get the opportunity, I'll have more to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's good to have another kick at this bill, so to speak. It was the Mike Harris government that introduced mergers and amalgamations in this province, back in the 1990s. Some of them have worked and some of them haven't worked, but in any case, this PSLRTA legislation was put in place to actually address that. Speaker, it's been working for 20 years. It sets out a systematic way for unions to figure out who's going to represent the same classifications of workers at the end of the day. All this bill is doing is actually pitting the

firefighters' issues that they've been trying to get for 20 years against the other broader public sector unions. This government is good at creating chaos in labour. We all remember Bill 115. We all remember Bill 122.

1710

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Remember the EllisDon bill?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Oh, and the EllisDon bill. Yes, we remember that one as well.

So all you're doing here with putting this piece in this bill—which has a couple of things that, certainly, the NDP can support around firefighters and around WSIA—is pitting union against union and causing labour chaos and strife once again.

I guarantee that there will be a charter challenge on this issue. The unions will be taking this government to court on a charter challenge based on the RCMP decision of just last year, where the Supreme Court wrote that workers have the right to choose their representative—not just to unionize, but to actually choose who their representative is going to be. This government is actually taking away that right by introducing this change to this act and putting this poison pill in this omnibus bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the discussion on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Now, you have heard today that this bill is going to be affecting three separate areas: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. Changes under this bill are going to provide increased fairness for all workers across Ontario. We're talking about firefighters; we're going to see more tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector. We are ensuring that broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible through greater efficiency and stability. And we're going to be helping to provide fair and just conditions for workers' compensation in that particular system.

I do want to share with you a very quick story about firefighters in my riding of Kitchener Centre. It was June. We were gathered with a group of supporters to mark our one-year anniversary. We are at Victoria Park, right by the lake, and a young boy noticed that there was another boy in the lake drowning. He came over to some adults who were standing there and said, "I think that there's a child in there drowning." I quickly got on the phone and called 911 while my riding association president—his name is Sean Sullivan—without thinking jumped in and grasped this boy just as he was going down, and brought him up. If you remember John Milloy, our previous MPP for Kitchener Centre—he was at this event. Long arms; he reached over.

I had called 911. The very first people to arrive on the scene at this situation were the firefighters. They got the boy out and they made sure that he was okay. He had ingested some water. But they were the first ones there, and we were very impressed by this.

I'm very proud of the firefighters in Kitchener Centre and in all of Ontario. To the brave men and woman who

work in this field to keep us safe, I say that they deserve our support with this strengthened bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to have my two-minutes of questions and comments on Bill 109. I think we've seen, as some other speakers have said today and earlier this week, a pattern with the government. This is a situation where we've had four government members—from Burlington, Brampton—Springdale, Cambridge and Ajax—Pickering—speak to the bill. This is a planned strategy that this government has, that they're going to have as many people split those 20-minute rotations as possible to get to a point to try to justify to you, Speaker, and to the table to move this forward with closure or with time allocation.

I particularly want to bring forward the fact that there is some division in the opposition benches on this bill. When the government puts its guillotine motion, to use the word that Mr. Yakabuski used earlier today, I would hope that they would take into consideration that there is some division in the opposition benches, and that they will have some hearings on this bill across the province so that we can get those differing opinions on the record. It probably won't happen. We'll probably have to amend that motion to make it happen.

I do want to echo what my colleague Mr. Yakabuski mentioned earlier, and that's about the member from Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, who, from his first days in this place, has always stood up on the double-hatter issue.

I know in my riding—it's a predominantly rural riding—we only have two professional firefighters groups, in Brockville and in Gananoque. The balance is with volunteers. I know some of the very, very small municipalities rely on the volunteer efforts of some of those professional firefighters in the bigger centres. They also include Kingston and Ottawa for those municipalities closer to those cities. So I do support those provisions. I think they do help out small rural communities like the ones that I represent.

I look forward to further debate. But I do want to accelerate the debate to say that we need hearings. We need to be able to have those differing views brought forward to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the government, whomever that will be. The member from Burlington, for a final comment.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: What a pleasure to join the members opposite from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Welland, my colleague from Kitchener Centre—a vibrant discussion, as always, Mr. Speaker, and an opportunity to salute our firefighters.

What I love about this place—and I'm still learning, because I haven't been here for terribly long—is that we get all kinds of viewpoints, from all sides of the province and all sides of the House. As oftentimes can be, sometimes it's glass half empty and sometimes it's glass half full. Often on this side of the House, and certainly

when it comes to this important legislation, I would say that we are definitely on the glass-half-full side of the conversation today.

When it comes to safeguarding our workers, when it comes to fairness, when it comes to the double-hatting provisions that were already addressed, when it comes to helping resolve disputes, when it comes to helping our firefighters—I have to tell you that my firefighters in Burlington have urged me to support this legislation, were pleased to hear that I was speaking on it today, and are just delighted that government is taking these steps.

If you'll indulge me, Speaker, in my wrap-up I just want to talk about something that I hadn't had the chance to speak about, and that is the Fair Practices Commission that will be enshrined in this legislation. It's an important feature because it's an independent, neutral and confidential resource for injured workers, employers and service providers, and its services are free of charge. These services include looking into complaints, tracking complaint trends, identifying system-wide issues and recommending improvements to the WSIB.

So all in all, how can one not support a piece of legislation that does all of the important things that Bill 109 does? I encourage all members of this House to support it, because this is an act of fairness, and our workers in Ontario deserve this and more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate. The member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. You should know that; we get to sit together most days.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts here on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, an act designed to, according to the minister, "Provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario by strengthening protections, enhancing compensation and ensuring that broader public sector transitions can go as smoothly as possible, while still balancing the democratic rights of workers."

That is a whole lot of proposed fairness and balance. Given their track record, I think we would all be forgiven if we didn't have some questions as to the ability of this government to live up to their words and commitment to fairness and balance, as we've all heard those words from these guys before.

For my part, while this bill would seek to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997 and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, it is the possible changes surrounding firefighters where my questions lie—most of them, that is.

Again, as our critic, the member from Wellington—Halton Hills, has noted a number of times in his comments, we in our caucus are clear in our support of fair labour laws in the province of Ontario, both historically and to this day. We've worked over the years on the need for a balance which respects the rights of workers and the needs of employers equally to create a stronger

relationship that helps to grow the economy while creating new, good-paying jobs.

In the case of firefighters, the continued work on creating that balance in turn serves to protect our people and allows those providing that protection the security that they will be supported if their lives are impacted on the job, whether that job is paid or volunteer. I would like to thank our critic, the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, for his work on this front—ongoing, consistent work that has seen him seek to move government policy forward in recognizing the dedication, determination and importance of double-hatter or two-hatter firefighters in our local communities.

1720

Speaker, as we've heard, my colleague's work led to proposed legislation that would have protected the right of full-time professional firefighters to continue serving as volunteer firefighters in their own communities, on their own free time, allowing the continued work of double-hatters to ensure protection for those in our more rural communities and areas, as they do in our major municipalities. These men and women not only work for our safety when they are on the job, but also provide fire protection services in smaller municipalities that do not require and could not possibly afford a full-time salaried fire department, in their off-hours.

Yet time and again, we've seen the emergence of disturbing trends in which double-hatters faced union reprisals and even dismissal from their full-time employment due to their off-hour volunteer efforts. While I believe we can all agree that double-hatters provide valued experience and expertise that can benefit their volunteer co-workers, due to the fact that my colleague's attempt at legislating two-hatter rights failed to take hold, these noble men and women have continued to face a series of hurdles aimed at preventing the practice from moving forward. It's not right. It has never been right and that's why, again, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills has never given up that fight.

It's to his credit, in part, that this issue remains front and centre since he first decided to move forward with his private member's bill in 2002, based on the principle that the need for community safety in small-town Ontario and the freedom to volunteer in a person's free time should be, in fact, a government priority. It was an effort that received expressions of support from the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, representing volunteer firefighters, Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Fire Marshal of Ontario.

On that, as we've heard from our critic, the Fire Marshal of Ontario at the time, Bernard Moyle, actually appeared before the justice committee to express his support. Not only that, Speaker, he sounded the alarm bell on the impact of the government failing to act to prevent the systematic attacks on the vital service performed by our double-hatters. He noted, and I quote from committee:

"The sudden or phased withdrawal of two-hatters from communities dependent on volunteer fire departments

could significantly impact on their ability to provide an adequate level of fire protection and may in some cases pose a potential serious threat to public safety for the following reasons.

"There would be a loss of experience, leadership and expertise in some communities. In fact, for that very reason, even a single two-hatter can make a significant difference in a small rural community. For example, some two-hatters serve as senior officers and captains and have fire prevention and training responsibilities, which are key functions in any fire department.

"There may be a reduced capacity for providing adequate emergency responses during weekdays, when two-hatters are more readily available due to their shift schedules.

"Increased response times may occur, at least until replacements can be recruited and adequately trained, if in fact replacements are available within the community. There may be an increased time in which to assemble an adequate fire attack team and a potential short-term reduction in fire ground effectiveness, resulting in greater fire losses.

"The time required to recruit and train full-time, part-time or volunteer firefighters can be extensive, creating short-term delivery difficulties. In some communities there may not be a pool of potential candidates available to become volunteer firefighters and a community may not be able to afford hiring full-time firefighters, creating a potential public safety issue.

"In a number of communities that have a heavy reliance on two-hatters, the sudden withdrawal of their services could create a potential serious threat to public safety."

Again, this was the justice committee back in 2002, and his words ring just as true today as they did then. That's because, while my colleague's private member's bill did receive those expressions of support from the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario and other groups, it did not receive an expression of support from all corners of this House. The lack of support led to the defeat of the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act on a third reading vote on December 11, 2002. But as I said, the defeat of the bill did not mean the end of the fight for those looking to create a workable solution to protect our double-hatters. It's a fight that continues year after year as double-hatters go through new trials and challenges to their full-time employment just for the right to protect their neighbours.

It was just a year ago that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario applied for intervener status in a case before the Ontario Labour Relations Board on behalf of a professional firefighter who works in one community, but also serves as a volunteer firefighter for his local municipality. That firefighter had been banned from the firefighters' union association because of his volunteer service. Further, as his membership within the union association had been removed, the union sought his dismissal from full-time employment, as only association members in good standing are able to be members of the full-time firefighter bargaining unit.

To their credit, AMO stood up for the firefighter, indicating that firefighters should be able to use their free time as they wish without reprisal. They indicated that “For hundreds of Ontario municipalities it makes fiscal and logical sense to rely on a combination of full-time professional firefighters, double-hatters and volunteers to protect the community.” Adding that, “It is the job of individual municipalities to decide how to deliver fire protection services as determined by local need and circumstance. One size does not fit all.” I couldn’t agree more.

While today, from what we understand, Bill 109 goes at least some of the way to answering the questions that have long plagued those firefighters who choose to answer the call in their local communities in addition to their regular paid duties, many questions remain. It’s those questions specifically relating to compensation for firefighters who get sick due to a work-related circumstance that I wish to examine a little further.

Speaker, it has now been close to eight years since the government passed legislation allowing for regulations related to compensation for firefighters who get sick due to work-related circumstances. Soon thereafter, a regulation unanimously passed giving compensation to full-time firefighters who have contracted certain cancers or illnesses, in cases where the illness arose due to work as a firefighter. The regulation identifies at least eight types of cancers, including brain, bladder and other cancers, as presumed to be work-related when contracted by firefighters.

Unfortunately, it is the issues relating to coverage for double-hatter firefighters in similar situations where our enduring questions lie. Those questions come close to home, as it was just over about a year and a half ago that I began asking questions and working on possible legislative solutions of my own after a concern over benefits for firefighters who develop cancer prompted two-hat firefighters to leave the Wellesley fire department in March 2014. Specifically, the firefighters’ concerns related to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and its handling of cases of firefighters working for multiple departments.

The fact is that under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, there are no specific rules for double-hatters. To fill this legal gap, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has used a rigid interpretation of section 94 of the act, which states that if a presumptive cancer claim is made, the last employer is responsible. For example, if a firefighter leaves his job in Kitchener, starts work in Toronto and then develops a presumptive cancer, Toronto would be responsible for the claim because that would be the last place he has worked.

The issue came to a head in my riding when the WSIB applied this legal interpretation to a case involving a double-hatter in Waterloo region who was diagnosed in 2012 with a presumptive cancer, working out of the city of Waterloo. By using this section, section 94, the board determined that the municipality where the firefighter had fought his last fire must assume responsibility for the

claim despite different levels of compensation or different schedules, either a schedule 1 or a schedule 2 employer. One pays premiums; the other pays the claim—the difference in the two. According to the WSIB guidelines, determining the cause of the cancer is on a case-by-case basis, looking at employment history and workplace exposures over time. But it also says that another factor is the last exposure prior to the onset of the occupational disease.

1730

That is the sticking point here, Speaker, and the point that we continue to get hung up on. Ultimately, the ruling meant that a double-hatted firefighter, volunteering for a rural department while working for an urban one, could be denied the higher level of benefits if his last call was with the rural department. It’s a bit ludicrous when you think of it like that. To attribute the onset of cancer to one’s last rural call for help simply doesn’t make much sense. I’m certainly no doctor, but from what I know of cancer, it’s usually attributed to a buildup over time. It’s not something you just catch one day when the rural neighbour you’re saving breathes on you—or exposed to a fire per se.

That said, the WSIB, in its infinite wisdom, determined liability through use of section 94 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, which states that the “employer who last employed the worker in the employment in which the disease occurs is the worker’s employer for the purposes of the insurance plan.” In other words, according to this section, the last employer is responsible for the insurance claim. That’s where the problem is, Speaker.

Further, that same problem has meant that a fire department that once benefited from the experience of full-time firefighters to complement their volunteer forces has been forced to bear the brunt of resignations in the face of risks to full-timers’ potential sick benefits.

In the wake of the enduring concerns that hit home in my area, I moved to host a roundtable discussion at the Wellesley fire department, to help bring clarity to the issue of firefighter compensation throughout our region and, in fact, across Ontario. Unfortunately, no representatives from the WSIB participated in that discussion, and the information the board provided to local officials, firefighters and members of the media failed to provide any clarity whatsoever on how the board determines liability for presumptive cancer claims made by double-hatters.

To make matters worse, a WSIB response to the media preceding my meeting only further muddied the waters, stating that WSIB benefits would remain the same whether Waterloo or Wilmot, Wellesley or Woolwich paid out a presumptive cancer claim because they have all selected the maximum coverage. The response fell well short of clarifying what would happen to a presumptive cancer claim made by a firefighter volunteering in a community that hasn’t selected the maximum coverage—in fact, there are many municipalities throughout the province of Ontario that do not—nor did it explain

what would happen to additional benefit packages, including those that may have negotiated further benefits with their employer. For instance, if they've negotiated a year if you're diagnosed with a presumptive cancer—they may have topped it up to a second year off. That may be negotiated within a collective agreement, as in the case of Waterloo, I believe.

The confusion left in the wake of WSIB decision-making and lacklustre responses has placed the critical role played by full-time firefighters volunteering at fire halls in surrounding rural municipalities in jeopardy. Again, after surviving challenges on a number of fronts already, this vital working relationship was thrown into further question because of a gap in Ontario's laws that could lead to a dramatic drop in compensation for firefighters who develop cancer.

The bottom line is that this continued situation presents a serious safety risk for our rural communities, and so I continue, even after the introduction of Bill 109, to call on the government to take immediate action to fix the law before rural fire departments in Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich lose the essential service that double-hatters provide—and, for that matter, right across the province of Ontario.

I reiterate that call because following the introduction of Bill 109, and after I sent over a detailed explanation of the problem and its impacts, I called the minister's office for a briefing on the matter and the bill's possible effects to address the situation, and, unfortunately, at that briefing the questions continued to go unanswered. Even after explaining the issue in detail to the minister's staff, they were unable to even remotely provide any answers as to the potential for Bill 109 to meet the needs of double-hatter firefighters concerned about risks to their sick benefits. Now, they did leave and they've gone away, and I hope that the minister and his representatives will look at the proposed solution that I did give them at the time, and I hope that we can work through this, potentially in committee as an amendment.

That said, I can report that even as this speech was being written, the minister's staff did attempt to shed some light on the situation with an email that came in a couple of hours ago. I do want to thank them for that, of course; only, the response itself seemed to provide little more than what has all been said before.

In the minutes I have left, I will read the email response:

"Firefighters, both full-time and volunteer, who are injured or develop an occupational disease, are entitled to the same types of benefits and services from the WSIB."

"It's important to note that in determining the employer of record for a firefighter's occupational disease claim, the 'last fire fought' is not the sole determining factor the WSIB considers."

This mirrors the response we've seen before. While it sounds good on the face of it, the issue begins to get a little more complicated when the email goes on to note that, "In any WSIB claim where the worker has more than one employer and an occupational disease may have

occurred, the WSIB must determine which employer is the employer of record. In cases of occupational disease in firefighters who are double-hatters, the WSIB looks at the worker's entire employment and exposure history, and a number of other factors to determine the employer of record."

Then the clarity that was noted at the beginning of the email starts to fall apart altogether when you read that:

"If the WSIB determines that the employer of record is the municipality for which the worker volunteers as a firefighter, and

"If the municipality is one of the 30% that has selected a coverage amount lower than the maximum, then

"The firefighter's loss of earnings benefits could then be lower than if the WSIB determined that the firefighter's full-time employer was the employer of record, assuming the worker's full-time earnings were at or greater than the maximum."

So there you go, Speaker. The more that things change, the more they stay the same, it seems. While we are hopeful for some of the changes proposed for firefighters in Bill 109, and while we hope the bill will at least address some of the ongoing challenges to double-or two-hatters, it's clear that when it comes to some of these more intricate matters, specifically surrounding sick benefits, the bill actually continues to provide little clarity at all.

As we continue to work on these issues and as this bill heads to committee, which I'm sure it eventually will, I want to remind members that even as we strive toward the balance and fairness which respects the rights of workers and the needs of employers, let's not forget those who fight on our behalf to protect lives, in both urban and smaller rural communities, those double-hatters, who require some balance and fairness themselves.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, because he did raise some issues that, at least, I haven't heard about in the few days that I've been sitting in here listening and debating Bill 109.

I know that, for issues around injuries and illnesses of firefighters, the issue that he raised about loss of earnings in those situations—I don't get why the government, when they're looking at a bill, isn't looking at the entire impact of that bill, at the end of the day, in all of those kinds of situations, to make sure that our workers are protected.

They've gone to some length to ensure that firefighters have the same protections that other workers have under the Labour Relations Act by amending the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. On the other hand, they haven't addressed the issues of what happens with respect to firefighters who are full-time in one place and part-time in another place and there is an injury: Are there enough benefits in place to actually cover their loss of earnings? I think that's an important piece that needs to be addressed.

Certainly, on the issue of PTSD, it's an issue that affects firefighters and many other front-line workers. I don't know why the government isn't addressing that important issue as part of this omnibus bill, as opposed to throwing in this PSLRTA piece, which isn't a priority at all because there have only been two votes in the last two years, because that's the number of mergers or amalgamations that have actually taken place in the last two years.

I think the government needs go back and have a look at that. I know that, clearly, we'll be bringing forward some amendments when we get to committee with respect to the PSLRTA part of this bill.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The bill itself is one, I think, that contains—and the member has admitted this or suggested this—some very positive provisions in terms of labour relations in the province. One of the areas that was touched upon is that of firefighters and the presumption—I know the issue—of a disease related to an occupation. It is certainly present when it comes to firefighters.

I know that we, just this week, buried Corry Vanderlee in St. Catharines, a long-serving captain in the St. Catharines fire service. He had a bout or two, in fact, with cancer recurrence and fought very hard but, ultimately, passed away.

Many who are in the occupation of firefighter are exposed to chemicals, fires that take place and combustibles that, ultimately, have an impact on their lives. It may only be one occasion where there was a particular fire where there was a release of substances that caused an acute problem for that firefighter. More often, it is exposure over a number of years, because they are confronting, on an ongoing basis, combustible materials, which we find out, somewhere along the way, have an impact on an individual's health.

Many of the changes that have been made have been very positive in terms of how they impact firefighters. There are other provisions in this bill, as well. There was extensive consultation—and I think that's important—before this bill was presented to the Legislature. I think, ultimately, it will be a benefit to the province and the workers within it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: In Thornhill, while we don't have a lot of volunteer firefighters, as far as I know, we certainly have a great team—on the Vaughan side and in the city of Markham—of firefighters protecting our community.

Just this morning, I got a message—just to tell you how tuned in the community is—to ask why there were fire trucks, six of them, on a small court in Thornhill, as well as an ambulance. Apparently, what happened was a couch caught on fire. This took place yesterday, late in the evening; a couch caught on fire. It was a group of

townhouses, and they were going and checking all the attics in the whole row of townhouses to make sure that there wasn't somehow a spark that could be smouldering and spreading.

That's the kind of proactive, trained firefighters that we want and we need and we have in our province. You don't train doctors overnight, you don't train nurses overnight and you certainly don't train first responders and firefighters overnight. If they are able and willing to help out, in any capacity, in their community—on a volunteer basis or even to work in two different communities, if that's what is needed; perhaps part-time work or something like that—I cannot understand why we wouldn't be supporting that and why their associations life in any way happier, I'm all for it.

We want firefighters to be appreciated, to be well trained, to be safe and, also, to be happy in their workplace. I think that that's something that we forget about sometimes. We're enjoying ourselves so much here, Mr. Speaker, that we forget that others might not be enjoying their careers as much as us. If the firefighters are asking for anything at all in order to make their careers or family life in any way happier, I'm all for it.

Let's all stay happy and ensure that our firefighters are happy as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise again. I have not heard any member on the government side give us a fully nuanced explanation as to the need for the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act schedule of this bill. I beg—I propose to the members of the government: Tell us why this is needed. Give us one rational explanation of why you need to do this today. The next person to get up—hopefully you will have a chance—tell us why. That's my question to you. Because, as we have clearly articulated, there have only been two requirements for a vote in the last two years, in 2014-15. There is not massive labour upheaval when mergers happen in the public sector involving these institutions, whether it be hospitals, municipalities or schools. It's not a priority. And those labour unions who are involved in that type of negotiation aren't asking for this.

So we just want to know why, what the rationale is for you to have to do this. Because ultimately, it is a subversion of the democratic right that that member of that union has, well articulated through the Supreme Court decision involving the RCMP, where they have the right to choose and to vote on their representation. You're taking that away. Again, I'd like to know why and ultimately, I guess, I'm going to want to know how you intend on doing that without initiating a charter challenge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for his final comments.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm back at the pleasure of the whip; I know he'll be happy to see me. Nonetheless, I

want to thank the members who commented on my remarks with regard to Bill 109. I do hope that the Ministry of Labour took some notes during my remarks. I got into some specifics as to how I feel the bill could be potentially strengthened to deal with a problem that came up in my riding about a year and a half ago.

It's really just a fluke and a scenario that perhaps wasn't picked up on when the presumptive legislation was brought in, as well as the WSIB Act, when determining benefits or the employer who will pay for those benefits should a double-hatter be diagnosed under the presumptive cancer. There was an example of that in my community. It then forced volunteer firefighters who also served as full-time firefighters to depart the volunteer forces because their families could eventually be at risk—their own financial risk—should they be, God forbid, diagnosed under the presumptive cancer.

I hope that they will look at this. Clearly the problem still exists. I think it was identified in a meeting previously, a few years ago; there was acknowledgement of a gap within the law, and I hope that they take that opportunity now to close it.

In the last 30 seconds, I definitely want to thank both our full-time firefighters in the city of Kitchener and my community, but more importantly those volunteer firefighters who work full-time through the day, shift work, even possibly as a full-time firefighter, and give their own time away from their families at all hours of the night to get up and respond to the call to help our community each and every day.

I want to thank those for the work that they do, their service; and with that, I hope that the government will take my suggestions and fix this problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just got a call from Peterborough, and the good folks of Peterborough say that they want this debate to continue because they were very impressed with the speech from the honourable gentleman from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. So I want it to continue, to give him his opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Minister, before I continue, I do beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members public business such that Mr. Tabuns assumes ballot item number 6 and Ms. Sattler assumes ballot item number 23.

Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to once again rise to speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I had two minutes to speak to it a little earlier in debate. I had planned on 20

minutes. I've got about 10 minutes left, so I'll hit on some of the key points.

1750

There are a number of points to go on in depth, but just to keep it short in light of time, Bill 109 contains a number of proposed changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, also known as FPPA; the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997, also known as PSLRTA; and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, also known as WSIA. The changes range from what can be considered housekeeping issues to more substantial changes that are very concerning. I look forward to speaking to as many elements of the bill as I can get to in my 10 minutes today. Luckily, we had an excellent one-hour lead from our labour critic sitting next to me here. She touched on a lot of the points that I would also have touched on today. She has covered them just in case I can't get to them.

New Democrats have long advocated for the betterment of working conditions for Ontario families, and the ability to earn a fair wage and career stability. That said, there are too many Ontarians who work at precarious jobs, work for too little or are placed in unsafe conditions. I think the debate today really strikes the core of the workplace issues that we have talked about at length in this chamber. Specifically, we need to ask ourselves, as a province, what supports we can offer when someone is injured on the job. Everyone in this chamber needs to understand the value of workers' ability to exercise democracy when choosing who will represent them in the workplace.

To begin, and just for some background on my personal experience with some of the labour organizations this legislation impacts, I currently serve as the NDP critic for education. I was appointed to this role last spring, and I'd like to thank the leader for the opportunity to be the education critic. Having come from education, having been a school board trustee, it's a sector very near and dear to my heart. I appreciate the ongoing support of my colleagues here in the New Democrat caucus.

That being said, Speaker, I've heard countless stories from education support workers in Windsor and across Ontario about the on-the-job hazards they face daily. Just to build on that, I had my assistant here from Toronto sit in on a meeting. He was actually shocked to hear of some of the issues that our education workers face on a daily basis, specifically the support staff who help assist the teachers when they're dealing with some of the students who have some special education needs. When you hear of support staff who are there to help to ensure that all children succeed regardless of their abilities—I mean, that is the goal: that every student has the ability to learn to the best of their ability and to access our public education system.

Unfortunately, some of the staff who help service these students are sometimes put into some situations, and they don't feel supported from the government side when they bring their concerns forward. For instance, we

heard stories of support staff who have to wear Kevlar sleeves. For those who aren't familiar with Kevlar, Kevlar is the same material that police officers have in their bulletproof vests. We hear of them having to wear that because we have children who aren't maybe put in the best situation as far as the classroom atmosphere, so they're exposed to triggers that would set them off. The reason they're put into these situations is because we're seeing cuts to education. The Minister of Education talks about no cuts to the classroom; that, in fact, is not true. We're not seeing the supports for these students, and ultimately, it's the students and the staff who are paying the price. It's shocking to some to hear about what education workers actually face on a daily basis.

It's not just first responders, police officers and firefighters and such who we see are put in dangerous situations. Sometimes it's support staff in schools, and we need to make sure that not only do they have the supports they need, but that these students do, so that the students can do the best that they possibly can. We want to see them excel.

I think that we need to remember that workplace danger looks different across the industries, as I've touched on in the education sector. Speaking specifically to schedule 1 of the bill, and being mindful of my time, this speaks directly to some of the issues that firefighters face. As I said in my two minutes prior, I don't think any of us can argue the fact that firefighters provide a very valuable service, and they are often put in harm's way. Sometimes, the issues that they face, we don't see them immediately. Sometimes it's down the road, later in life, after retirement, that you see some of the things they had been exposed to and how that's affected them on a personal level.

We need to make sure that firefighters are supported, that their concerns are recognized and that there is respect for the work that they do. And that goes far beyond them responding to a fire. There are so many more services they provide. Outside of the scope of their work, we also looked at what they give back to the community. Aside from working hard to keep us all safe, they then go on to do fundraising. They get involved with many different organizations, non-profit organizations, in the community to help those who are less fortunate than many of us in the room. I think it's important that we take very good care of the people that take care of us.

Some of the issues that are addressed in this bill when it comes specifically to firefighters are an incredible step forward in recognizing exactly what it is that they bring to our community and the value that they bring to the community, and the jobs they do for us.

Unfortunately, the downfall is that the government has tied to that good piece in the legislation a piece that is viewed broadly amongst other unions as basically an attack on their democracy. What we're seeing is that by adding in here the piece about when we're looking at a merger of, say, a hospital, and so potentially two unions having to come together, they're taking away the democratic right of all those members from both unions that are affected; they're taking away the ability for these people to say, "This is who we choose to represent us." I think that it's very unfortunate that they would take something that is such a positive step forward, like the legislation to recognize the value of the services firefighters provide, and tie it to another piece in the legislation where they're basically saying that there's going to be one union that's better than another or "We're going to make the decision of who gets to represent these people" rather than the broader public, those within the union, being able to say, "This is who we feel represents us the best and this is who we choose."

So I think it's really unfortunate that they've gone that route, and I'm not quite sure why those two pieces need to be tied together. As the member from Essex had brought up, there has been no explanation from the government side about why there is specifically the change to the way two unions would then come together and choose who would represent them. I'd be very interested in hearing from the government side. I'm sure those that are in unions and even those outside of unions would like to know why those two pieces are tied together.

Being mindful of the time, Speaker, and knowing you're going to cut me off any minute, I think the important thing to note is that firefighters want the piece that's in here for them. They really appreciate what's in here and they think it's very thoughtful. But I don't think they appreciate being put in a position where it looks like, in order to get what they want, other public sector employees have to take a hit, a very negative hit.

I look forward to hearing others during debate at a different time, and I would really appreciate to hear someone from the government side stand up and explain why these two pieces are put together when we could pull the firefighter piece out, pass that legislation and then deal with the other section at another time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members for debate this afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanhof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daine (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
		Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
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Wednesday 4 November 2015

Mercredi 4 novembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorables Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: Good morning, Speaker. Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be able to rise today to speak on the debate of Bill 122, which will amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act. It has been almost a year—December 23, 2014—since the Court of Appeal for Ontario ruled that some existing provisions of the Mental Health Act violate section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice."

The Mental Health Act, as it currently stands, does not do the job of protecting these section 7 rights of approximately 330 long-term, involuntarily committed mental health patients in Ontario. That is, those people who were put in psychiatric institutions for six months or longer and who did not commit themselves to be there.

According to statistics from 2009-10, approximately 34% of patients involuntarily committed in Ontario were in hospital for less than a week, 80% were in hospital for less than a month and 98% were in hospital for less than six months. That leaves 2% of patients who were involuntarily committed for longer than six months. These are the 330 people that the amendment, this Bill 122, pertains to.

The decision by the Court of Appeal was unanimously ruled by five justices. They recognized that a gap in the existing Mental Health Act means that people can be detained indefinitely even though the Consent and Capacity

Board does not have full powers to rule on the treatment, or the lack of it, that a patient is receiving. These long-term patients, therefore, are being deprived of their right to liberty without procedures in place that protect fundamental justice.

The effect of the ruling is to limit the length of involuntary committals to approximately six months. The court recognized the need to balance public safety concerns with the need to properly protect the rights of patients, so they suspended the ruling for 12 months to afford the Legislature, where we are today, the opportunity to consider how best to deal with the issues of long-term involuntary committals and the power of the Consent and Capacity Board. That is why we have Bill 122 before us today.

But we have a major problem here, because the 12 months is almost upon us and we have yet to be concerned about our ability to give such an important matter the consideration it deserves in the time we have available. The government opposite has known for 10 and a half months that this needed to be done, and yet here we are doing it now, almost to the day. It took them nine months from the court ruling before they introduced this bill. Whatever would have prolonged the thought of making sure we were getting this bill forward quicker is beyond me; I don't understand the logistics behind the government. But I will go on. Now we're racing against the clock to get it done.

Mental health is very complex. It has a history of failing to respect the rights of patients. Yes, times have changed a lot in the past 30 or 40 years. We don't hear the same language we heard back then; we see greater levels of empathy and understanding. But we still have a long, long way to go to treat mental illness the same way we treat other illnesses. Many people have worked very hard over the years to reduce the stigma, but it's still there. So we need to make sure that we listen, not just to the legal experts, but also to the advocacy groups and the individuals and families with their experience in mental health. The timeline that the government has imposed on us with this bill makes it very hard to do.

On Monday evening, Speaker, I attended a fundraiser for the Good Shepherd in our hometown of Hamilton. It's a wonderful organization that works to serve a wide variety of clients—women needing shelter from abuse, which is the fundraiser I was there for. It was a wonderful reception and fundraiser for Mary's Place, Speaker, which is a women's shelter in our hometown. They do emergency food, clothing programs and assisted living for seniors, just to name a few.

As the NDP critic for children and youth services, I have a particular interest in their youth service programs, where they're committed to helping youth who are struggling with poverty, family conflict, homelessness, abuse, neglect and mental health issues. They do absolutely fantastic, terrific work. A year or so ago, I spent an entire week travelling through all of the children's services they provide in Hamilton.

Just to give you a flavour of how difficult their job is, in a city the size of Hamilton they have funding for 1.6 mental health clinicians to serve all the youth in greater Hamilton. For any youth within any programming in Hamilton who needs mental health services, there are only 1.6 clinicians to do all of that work. It's pretty much impossible. Without adequate funding, too many kids descend into a darker place. When the opportunity for early intervention is missed, they can become dangerous to themselves and dangerous to others.

I was told at this dinner on Monday night about the sad passing of two youths in the last two weeks, both from crystal meth. Both had been in programs within the Good Shepherd and both had mental health illness. Because of the lack of funding and because of the lack of early intervention, these children found themselves, first of all, addicted to crystal meth, which is everything under the kitchen sink, to death. So I think we need to do better.

0910

According to the Ministry of Health, approximately 30% of Ontarians will experience a mental health or substance abuse challenge during their lifetime; one out of 40 people will face a serious mental health illness. The rights of all Ontarians must be protected, and unfortunately those with a serious mental illness will run the risk of their rights being violated. In 2009, the Ontario Human Rights Commission had this to say in relation to the Ministry of Health discussion paper on a 10-year mental health and addiction strategy:

"The rights of people living with mental illness to: health; dignity; bodily integrity and security of the person, and equal treatment in employment, services (including health care), and housing are all fundamental human rights. Acknowledging these is integral to the re-development of the mental health system and can inform a culture shift towards equality for people with mental illnesses and addictions."

In *It Doesn't Work: Unpacking Mental Health Policy and Legislation*, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario said, "The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the supreme law in Canada and all other federal and provincial statutes related to the provision of care to people with mental illnesses in Ontario ... must conform to the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the charter."

Then they went on to say, "Provincial mental health legislation, therefore, must comply with the charter through a balance of the autonomy and liberty of the individual with the safety and security of the public." So not only was the government faced with a court ruling almost a year ago, but they had plenty of advance warning before that time that changes needed to be made to the

Mental Health Act to ensure compliance with the Charter of Rights. But again, they still left it until the last minute.

So I welcome the Court of Appeal ruling, and now it's our job to make sure that the charter rights of patients are respected and their voices are heard. We need to help protect the safety of patients and the public. We need to listen to the countless families, organizations, experts and individuals who have important insights to the broader change that needs to be made to our mental health legislation.

My colleague the member from Nickel Belt, in her one-hour lead on this debate, read a letter from Arthur Gallant, who had been asked to become a member of the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. At the age of just 25, Mr. Gallant had extensive experience with mental health. His mother suffered from a long-term mental illness and he himself was diagnosed with a mental illness at the age of 13. Ever since then, he has become a mental health advocate. He is a remarkable young man, and it is clear from his eloquent words that he deserved his place on that council, along with the other health executives that occupied the other seats around the table. I should mention that there was one other person on the council with lived experience, so that makes two people with lived experience on the council of 20.

Sadly, as expected, Mr. Gallant's experience, as recounted in his letter, suggests the exact opposite of what we need to see when it comes to patient involvement. He spoke of being shut out from the very start; nobody asked for his advice. When he did speak out, he was interrupted and shut down. He tried to get more involved, but he got nowhere. When he asked for explanations, none were given. His emails were ignored. That's how this government does consultation: ignore the people that it affects the most. That, Speaker, is not the way that we should be moving forward. We need to listen. We need to listen to people whose lives are affected.

So what, in fact, does this bill do? Under the proposed amendments, the Consent and Capacity Board will gain new powers to make orders concerning the manner of detention for involuntary patients, particularly those who have been in hospital for more than six months. Currently, the CCB, which is the Consent and Capacity Board, only has the authority to rule that an involuntary detention is valid or invalid, or in order to transfer to a different psychiatric facility. They cannot make any order concerning the treatment that that patient receives and the manner in which they are detained. They have no authority to impose conditions on the patient's detention and treatment. It is this lack of authority that violates the rights of these patients to procedural fairness.

This was the central point of the court case that led to the ruling. The individual, P.S., in *P.S. v. Ontario*, has been held in indefinite detention, without any mechanisms to ensure he gets the treatment and services he needs in the appropriate type of facility.

The amendments would allow the Consent and Capacity Board to transfer patients to another facility if the patient does not object. They would be allowed to place

the patient on leave of absence from the hospital on the advice of a physician, including prescribed terms and conditions.

They will be able to direct that the patient be provided with a different security level or different privileges, either inside or outside the facility. They will be able to direct access to the community and determine whether that should be supervised or unsupervised access.

The amendments will also allow the Consent and Capacity Board to direct that the patient be given vocational, interpretation or rehabilitation services, and they will be able to order an independent assessment of the patient.

It looks like the Consent and Capacity Board will be very busy, but that's not a bad thing. It's a good thing that they will have this new authority that brings the Mental Health Act in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But it does bring with it the costs associated with exercising this new authority, and that does not appear to be reflected in the government's plans. At the same time as the government plans to expand the authority of the Consent and Capacity Board, it is also reducing the funding. Go figure, Speaker. It seems to happen often. Pay more, get less. Interim actual reports for 2014-15 show expenditures for the CCB of \$6.2 million, but for 2015-16, funding is reportedly being cut to \$4.8 million.

We have been talking about mental health in this House since I've been here, and I know it's been long back—we've had select committees on mental health. We're doing it all. We're doing a great job of talking about it. But we're—they're cutting funding. I'm not even going to say "we're." They're cutting funding, again, to the most important aspects of our society. If we can't get mental health right, what in this society are we going to get right? Because everything is just going to snowball around it.

Work more, and less money to do it with—that is a big concern, and I worry about what it means for mental health patients.

Speaker, the clock's ticking. That's good. I'm close; I'm almost done. Twenty minutes goes pretty quick here in this House sometimes.

As I understand it, if we fail to meet the December deadline, the offending sections of the act will become unconstitutional and invalid. We have until December 23 to get this bill through. It's now November 4. The House rises on December 10, and next week the House is not sitting, as we have a constituency week. The time is ticking quicker than the government is allotting for, I think.

We're going to have to again push legislation through this House, with no concerns of getting it right or wrong. It doesn't really matter. Let's just shove it through, and the people of Ontario will suffer from it. That's what happens.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: But they also had years of advance warning—I know the member opposite likes to talk—years of warning to the House, years of warning, that these changes were needed, warnings from the On-

tario Human Rights Commission and from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. They've had plenty of time to prepare for this, but they have badly mismanaged this file.

0920

As a result, we find ourselves in this situation of again pushing legislation through this House as fast as we can get it. Bill after bill comes through this House. It's jammed through. It's time-allocated. People are shut down. There is no discussion. There is no community involvement. We don't even want to hear from the community, because community members who actually make it onto the board—and who are excited that they're going to be there and possibly make a change—are shut down. Nobody speaks to them. Nobody answers their emails. They speak over them when they ask questions. They don't want the involvement. They're tokens, a token population.

We see this time and time again with this government. They're selling off their hydro system. Public consultation? Absolutely not. Any polls that you do, 80%-plus of Ontarians are totally against it, but what does this government do? Push, push, push and ram it through as fast as they can. Ram it through, just like everything else.

Again, this important piece of legislation, Bill 122, that has been asked for, that we knew a year back had to be done—at the last minute, here comes the Liberal government, running through, seeing how fast we can push another piece of legislation through, with no public consultation, without making sure we get it right, without the dollars to back up the plan.

Let's talk about those numbers again, Speaker. How much is being cut? Just for the member opposite, because he looks a little concerned over there: In 2014-15, there was \$6.2 million in the CCB. Now that we've given them so much more work, guess how much we have now? It's \$4.8 million. More work, less money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I hope I didn't sound that negative when I was in opposition, though I suspect, if I went back in the records, that may have been the case. So I can't chastise anybody, having sat in opposition and, perhaps, being more negative than I should've been at that period of time.

This particular issue is one which has bedevilled government after government after government. Each one of us, as a representative in our constituencies, has received calls from distraught parents and family members who have people within the family who are suffering from mental illness. I must say, something positive is that we're now recognizing and talking about mental illness more and more in a very public way, because for years it got pushed to the back burner. Advocates were reluctant to talk about it. But all of us have had people come to us just distraught over what to do about a patient who is suffering from mental illness.

The court has ruled, and governments have to adjust to the courts. In this particular case, they gave the govern-

ment of Ontario a year, up until the date mentioned in December, to pass legislation which would deal with the concerns the court had expressed. Therefore, we are in a position of having to do that. I won't say this is relatively simple. It is not overly complex, but it does address specifically what the courts have told us. It may not be what many of us in the House would agree with—we don't always agree with the decisions of the court—but in this case, we must comply with it.

The minister, I know, and the Ministry of Health have wrestled with this problem for some time, trying to find the appropriate balance between the rights of the patients and the concerns that society has, including members of family, over the appropriate treatment of mental health patients.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to commend the member for Hamilton Mountain. She always speaks with passion representing her community, and she spoke for 20 minutes this morning on this issue that's obviously having an impact in the Hamilton area, as it is in Prince Edward-Hastings. There just simply aren't enough people on the ground to deal with the mental health cases that are piling up.

We talk about our police officers. Our police officers are dealing so often with mental health cases because there are not enough mental health workers out there.

We have a great advocate in our community, Sandie Sidsworth of the Canadian Mental Health Association for Hastings and Prince Edward. She's the executive director. She's done a magnificent job over the last couple of years of really bringing these issues to light. But what the government hasn't been able to do is provide the funding increases so that we can provide those counsellors on the ground to help deal with these situations as they arise. Police officers shouldn't be doing it; it should be trained counsellors dealing with these issues. Unfortunately, so many of our police officers out there are tied up with these mental health cases when it should be a trained professional. So I commend the people who are on the ground who are doing the work, but this is a direct result of a government that either can't, is incapable or won't manage its own fiscal house.

The Auditor General warned us several times that when you don't get your own fiscal house in order—speaking to this government—it starts to crowd out the services that you should be providing in your community; it limits the ability for governments to provide the types of services that need to be provided. We all know in this House that mental health is the biggest issue facing our health care system in Ontario because we're not treating it properly. And part of the reason that we're not is because we don't have our financial house in order; we can't provide the funding and the resources that are necessary to keep our most vulnerable people healthy. That's what it comes down to, in my opinion.

I congratulate, again, the member from Hamilton Mountain on her speech this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad I'm here in the House today to add comments to this debate. I think we all agree that mental health needs to be destigmatized and talked about just like any health care issue that anyone experiences—it's a health care issue.

When we're talking about the bill today, there are concerns about the timing when this has occurred. I understand the member for St. Catharines—I agree; it's a very complicated, delicate matter. But there is a disappointment in the fact that this government has kind of—it feels like it's being pushed.

I checked with the Clerk, because I wanted to make sure of the process, that there was no little order in our standing orders that we must go to committee, or can it be overridden? Definitely. When we have a debate, you have your introduction of the bill. Then we have second reading and there is a debate, which we're in right now. Then, usually, when second reading is over with—members can debate the bill as long as they wish, unless the government time-allotments it, and I speculate that this will probably be time-allocated—at that point, we usually vote for it to go to committee. But there is no requirement in the standing orders that any bill has to go to committee for people to present deputations and comments and make amendments. If that doesn't happen, if we don't send it to committee, the government can call it for third reading right away. It doesn't have to have debate on third reading either; it can just be agreed upon for royal assent.

So in the timing, this might be the plan the government has, because it is December 23 that the court decision has said that we have to make new legislation in order to accommodate the human rights factor in this issue.

That's just my question and speculation on the debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to say thank you very much to the member for Hamilton Mountain for her wonderful approach to this bill in the sense that—it's interesting that sometimes we're criticized for rushing things through or being late. I was part of the health care system for over 17 years before I had the great pleasure of representing the people of Ottawa-Orléans. As a former social worker, I would say that mental health, as acknowledged by some of our colleagues here, is one of the most complex and difficult issues that our youth, adults and also seniors are facing.

It's interesting when I hear the members saying that we do not consult. In this particular instance, because of the complexity of everything we had to do, we needed to consult with our stakeholders. My colleague here made reference to the fact that this is not an issue where you just make a decision. So, yes, there was a court ruling, and we had to look as a government and reach out to the people who are most affected, the people who are actual-

ly experiencing this issue, and see how we can best follow through the court system, but also protect the family members and give the right to our society to feel protected.

We also hear about the fact that we haven't invested in mental health. Well, I have to say, I am proud to say that, since 2003, our mental health and addiction funding has increased by over \$506 million, for a total of \$1 billion. Now our phase 2 is approaching.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain has two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: I have to say that I really enjoyed being able to delve into the work of this bill and what this means to people in Ontario and to the 330 people who are being held and could quite possibly just be let on the street as of December 23. The fact that the government has really just waited until the last minute—the member from St. Catharines talked about, whether we agree with the court ruling or not, it's got to be done. I welcome the court ruling. I welcome the government being forced into doing the right thing under human rights.

Thanks to the member from Prince Edward—Hastings. He's absolutely right: Our police officers are overwhelmed with mental health. We have to make sure we have a real plan to not only protect our police officers, but protect the people that they're serving or that they're coming upon that day.

Thanks to the member from London—Fanshawe. She talked about timelines. It's not a new story with this government. It has pushed things through—get it done—the lack of consultation. It will be interesting to see how the government makes this happen with the timelines that are left before us. Since we do have next week off for constituency week and Remembrance Day, there isn't much time left.

Thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans for her comments in talking about the complex issues. She is right; money has been put into mental health, but when we are talking about this section of mental health and the CCB, there has been a cut. There has been a cut to this, millions of dollars being cut. Do more, get less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to stand and support the amendments to the Mental Health Act.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have a problem.

Interjection: Houston.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Houston, we have a problem.

So the minister without portfolio is speaking to this?

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's already been talking.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I guess the Minister of Education beat you to it.

Interjections.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with—actually, I just got a note that says I should go first, okay?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That was for me.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Okay. Anyway, the note says I should go first, and it also says, which I already knew, that I'll be sharing my time.

Oh my goodness, we have all sorts of people we are sharing time with: the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and the member from Halton and, I believe it should say, the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We will sort this out.

I am sharing my time with the Chair of Cabinet, and he will figure out who else we should share time with.

But can we get serious here? Because this is a really serious topic, when we are talking about that group of patients who have mental illness that is so severe—typically some form of psychosis which is so severe—that their behaviour may lead either to harm to themselves or harm to others. This is the group of people that we are dealing with here. The issue which has been contentious for many, many years and many, many decades, in fact, probably: How do you balance the right of the patient to have some control over their own treatment and the rights of the community to be safe?

Quite frankly, what those of us who have been working in constituency offices for many years, and those of us who served on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, of which I am one—which is the legitimate concern of families that, in many cases, psychosis is so severe that getting treatment would actually assist the patient in getting to a place where they cease to be a threat to themselves. The conundrum is that the patient's wishes, absent treatment, may actually turn out to be different from the patient's wishes if only they could access treatment. So there's even a conundrum there about how you best determine the well-being of the patient. This is a very, very complicated area.

The court has found that the current provisions of the Mental Health Act do not sufficiently respect the right of the patient to intervene and request that they be able to cease being involuntarily detained. It's given a certain time frame by which we must amend the act, or we will be in the situation where we could be required to release any involuntary patients that have been held for more than six months. Quite frankly, Speaker, that's problematic, because we know that many of those patients who have been held for more than six months are a real threat to others in the community. Because of their psychosis, they may respond in extreme and violent ways. So we need to come to some solution.

Now, unlike what the member opposite has suggested, which is that there is some affront to the Legislature in bringing the bill at this point, what has actually been going on has been a very robust consultation with the various organizations that are involved in the discussion. The Ministry of Health, in fact, has spent a lot of time talking about this Court of Appeal decision with the Con-

sent and Capacity Board, the people whose rules we are actually changing; the Ontario Review Board, which would review those rulings; the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, the person who is legally charged with being the advocate for people who are being held involuntarily—the psychiatric patient advocate has been very much involved in the discussion, advocating on behalf of the patients; and, in addition to that, the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council, which has been responsible for our whole transformation.

I just wanted to add a little bit, because there's been some discussion around cuts. If we look at it from a children and youth mental health perspective, which is, of course, where the education system comes in, more than 55,000 additional children and youth are now receiving care. We have invested over \$11 million to place 144 mental health nurses in schools. More than 770 mental health workers are serving communities, schools and courts, and more than 1,000 additional psychiatric consultations are being held with children with mental health challenges each year through the Tele-Mental Health Service, because there are so many communities where there just simply aren't child psychologists. So it is true that we are investing in the prevention end of this, but we still have to sort out this particular problem.

I turn it over to my colleague the Chair of Cabinet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister without portfolio.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm awaiting the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to join the member for Halton.

In my years in this Legislature, one of the most difficult problems to deal with has been that of dealing with mental health patients. It's unusual for the patients themselves to contact us, but for the members of the family, they are beside themselves when they see great difficulty being experienced by the mental health patients themselves and the impact it has on the family. When they come to you and you ultimately say, "There is really nothing I can do for you because of the existing law," they are very, very disappointed, and understandably so.

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We're not supposed to get into, I guess, with the confidentiality of cabinet, dealing with the deliberations of cabinet, but I can tell you that, going through cabinet committees and cabinet as a whole, there was a robust discussion of this with different points of view being presented.

This is not a bill I would bring forward if I were changing the Mental Health Act. This is, instead, a response to a court ruling, which meant that the government had to tailor its policy to that particular court ruling.

I find that I am very much influenced by those who have members of the family who are doing harm to themselves or harm to others. It is just so disappointing to them, and they are so distraught over the fact that they have members of the family that apparently can't be helped by the system.

It is not simply funding. Our members have mentioned that the funding is going to be up to \$1 billion now, and \$220 million in addition to that. I don't want to get into funding, because there is considerable funding, but I want to get into that issue itself of how difficult it is. On the one hand, you have the advocates for patients themselves who say they have their rights, and on the other hand you have the family members, close friends, very often members of police services and others who say that you simply have to have laws which allow us to take more interventionist action to be able to assist these people. Many people come to our office and say, "Ultimately, I can tell you that my son"—or daughter—"will be dead within two or three years." What you hate to see is when that prediction comes true.

As I say, if I were constructing this—and I can tell you, there were many different points of view that were presented while this was being discussed within cabinet committees, because of that frustration that people have had over the years in dealing with these problems.

This bill will address a court ruling. Somewhere along the line, in the years to come, perhaps there will be other legislation that will pass the court's scrutiny and will deliver even better services and accommodate the needs of members of the family who have people in that family who have been hit with mental illness.

As I say, I've been in this Legislature for 38 years, and I have watched different governments wrestle with this. It is a very, very difficult and challenging problem to deal with.

I now yield the floor to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As my friend the member for St. Catharines said, this is in response to a court ruling, but I think it opens up a larger issue and one I would like to talk to. I know some of my colleagues will go into more detail.

I spent about 12 years of my life working on the streets. I started work around 9 o'clock at night, and I would finish around 3 or 4 in the morning. My son whom I fostered and adopted was one of these street-involved kids. The way a lot of young people are dealt with in mental health situations is that they're left, really, to nothing.

This was in another province. This was in Winnipeg, in a province that's not as wealthy as Ontario and doesn't have the mental health services or capacity that we have. We often talk in Ontario about how we have, somehow, inadequate services, and in some cases you can almost never really have enough services, given the complexity of the challenges we're facing. But in other parts of Canada that don't have the industrial, banking or mining base or wealth that Ontario has, those services sometimes are scarce and, quite frankly, often paid for by Ontarians and others in transfer payments.

I was always amazed: The kids I worked with had schizophrenia, were bipolar; they were, like my son, fetal alcohol syndrome, which means that you're born, basically, as chemically dependent into this world, which is

one of the cruellest things to see done to a child. I always admire him. He now has his own company, seven employees. He is married, which is something we never thought. It was a huge amount of intervention, but it was at the very core of this, because for my relationship with Michael, it was always his civil liberties.

He was HIV-positive and could be very aggressive because his mental illness would sometimes lead him to be violent—and parenting and getting the supports. I always said that if he was institutionalized he had all the mental health supports, but if he was with me in a family where dad would show up at high school, coach his hockey team and do all the things that he needed that I did for him—it was very hard to do that and do the mental health piece because you didn't get mental health support.

So we started a group with seven friends of mine; we called it the “extreme parenting group.” We all had children whom we were fostering or adopted who had fetal alcohol syndrome, who were bipolar or who had schizophrenia. Some of them had developed autism and some of them had constructs around genetic issues that were hard to deal with.

It was amazing to me, the number of children who end up solving their pain by illegally using prescription drugs or getting heroin. My son would shoot up, as much as 30 times a day, Talwin and Ritalin, which is a speedball. We have a vast amount of legal and illegal drugs out there that kids use to self-medicate their pain.

The other thing that they do is that they tend to be involved in prostitution and they tend to be involved in robbing themselves. They tend not to hurt other people; they commit crimes against themselves which are disruptive to their sense of self-esteem.

I agree with some of the other members and the member from St. Catharines in that this is a difficult issue. In my case, I remember coming home in February; it was 40 below and Michael had broken every window in my home. That cost me about \$17,000. He stole the television, stole my car, stole the VCR and stole the stamp collection. I always say to parents, “If you want to parent kids like that, your personal items cannot be more valuable to you than your children.” I have no regrets about that. I lost all of those things.

That's a high level. So how do we take care of these kids? It can't be just about mental health services. Every child should have the right to a parent who loves them. I learned not to be a very materialistic person because nothing in my life, living with Michael, allowed me to keep anything material. Many of my friends and many of the other kids whom I fostered for shorter periods of time had that serious thing. We often talk about, “It takes a village to raise a child,” that it takes us collectively. We live in a very materialistic society, where sometimes we're not prepared to make the sacrifices we need to. It's hard. No one ever thought Michael would make it to 18. I wish he wasn't representative.

We often hear in this society that we're taught to be afraid of strangers. The people who abused Michael were

previous parents of his who broke his leg, who gave him alcohol at age six, who drank before birth and left Michael with all kinds of disabilities that injured him. When he was sexually and physically assaulted, as were most of the kids, it was done by their parents or people they knew.

A lot of the politics is somehow, “People who abuse children are horrible strangers whom we need to protect people from.” It's usually the people whom they're most vulnerable to, because it's an uncle, it's a hockey coach or it's a parent—that's 80% or 90%. Almost all the kids whom I saw on the street were abused by someone who was in a position of care to protect them. That's what often triggered a lot of the mental health issues or compounded mental health issues that were in place.

I've just exceeded my time a bit, and I want to leave some time for the member for Halton. I think this a good thing, and I hope we as members will come together to take stronger action in the future beyond this legal issue of civil liberties versus treatment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I want to make sure that I address and acknowledge the remarks by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for being so honest with some of the comments he was making. It was very touching to hear some of that.

These amendments, if passed, would help ensure that patients who are detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months have their rights and freedoms protected while at the same time ensuring that health care providers can continue to provide excellent care to these patients.

Mr. Speaker, as you've heard already, this is a complex and serious issue. It's about respecting a person's rights and freedoms and balancing that with their family's concerns for their own safety. And as government, we have to be sure that we are concerned about the safety of society at large.

The provincial Mental Health Act provides for the involuntary detention of patients in psychiatric facilities where patients present a risk of harm to themselves or others. Let me give you a little bit of context, Mr. Speaker, about what we're talking about here. Mental health is a complex and important issue in Ontario's health care system. We know that one in five Ontarians will experience a mental health illness in their lifetime, and almost every person in Canada—every person—will be affected by someone with mental illness. Think about it. Those numbers are staggering.

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The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that 10% to 20% of Canadian youth are affected by mental illness. That's why our government has created a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, to make sure that we're addressing care on all levels and making sure that we're doing the right thing when it

comes to these families and individuals facing challenges in their lives.

The Court of Appeal addressed the involuntary admission and detention of patients under the Mental Health Act, and the court said that part of the act was inconsistent with section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave us until December 22 of this year to make these amendments to the Mental Health Act and make sure that we comply with the court's decision. That date is crucial. We need to get these things in place and we need to make sure that these individuals in society are protected. That's why we're moving as efficiently as we can to get the job done. It is about doing the right thing when it comes to the people of this province.

Specifically, the court struck down the provision of the act that allows a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. For example, what this does is it ensures that, from the Court of Appeal, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in partnership with the Ministry of the Attorney General, has reviewed the act and consulted with stakeholders on some of these proposed amendments. These proposed amendments, if passed, ensure that the Mental Health Act aligns with the Canadian Charter of Rights and at the same time enhances the rights of involuntary, long-term patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities.

The amendments that are being debated today would enhance the ability of the Consent and Capacity Board to make certain guidelines for patients who have been in a psychiatric facility as an involuntary patient for longer than six months. What this does is it makes sure the board takes into account, for example:

- the safety of the public;
- the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care;
- the mental condition of the patient;
- the reintegration of that patient into society; and
- other needs of the patient.

Also, it takes into account limitations that we will be placing—and could be placing—on a patient's freedoms.

These are tough decisions. Too many Ontarians are touched by mental health each year. The objectives of the Mental Health Act are ensuring community safety and helping patients, making sure that they get the help they need. Our government is committed to making the most appropriate care for those who need it most within the system.

I support these amendments. They are key to ensuring that we have a safe society for all involved. I think it's the right thing to do, and I am pleased to be standing up today and speaking to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions or comment?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is an honour, actually, to stand in this House today and reference the act that has been brought forward, amending the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

Speaker, we talk about mental health. First of all, we, as a caucus, recognize the devastating effects that mental illness has and, of course, the stigma attached to it.

We've heard statistics: one in five. One in five Canadians—or I saw another article that said one in five students—have mental health issues. How do you define it? How do you define mental health? I'm sure that for many of us, even here in the Legislature, over the course of our lifetimes, we've experienced a moment or two when we feel and believe—"How do I cope with this situation?"

I'm very pleased to say that in Chatham-Kent, they're promoting mental health. One of the things that the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit is doing is working with community partners to promote mental health by fostering the development of mental health wellness, supporting individual resilience, creating supportive environments and addressing the influence of the broader detriments of mental health.

We face unexpected problems every day, but it ties into one's ability to deal effectively with those problems. That, to me, is an indicator of good mental health or perhaps none.

There's so much more that I could say, but I think one of the things we need to realize is that we need to ensure that we have the proper resources in place so that these people can, in fact, get the help that they need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by members from the government benches. I know that Bill 122 seeks to protect the rights of long-term involuntary mental health patients in accordance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As New Democrats, we firmly believe that the rights of all Ontarians need to be protected and that all mental health legislation has to reflect the fundamental rights set out in the charter.

We agree it's time to amend the Mental Health Act to comply with the Court of Appeal ruling which found that portions of the act violate patients' rights under the charter.

On December 23, 2014, the Court of Appeal gave this Legislature one year to amend the Mental Health Act to better protect the rights of patients. The clock has been ticking, and the deadline of December 23, 2015, is fast approaching.

We're concerned that the Liberal government waited nine months after the court's ruling to introduce this bill. As a result of the government's long and unnecessary delay, the Legislature is now racing to meet the court-imposed deadline of December 23, at which point existing sections of the act will become invalid because they're in conflict with the charter.

The Liberals' long delay now leaves MPPs with just weeks to debate, hold hearings, amend and vote on this bill. The House rises on December 10, and this bill has to be completed by that date.

By taking nine months to simply introduce Bill 122 and another month to call this bill for second reading

debate, the government effectively reduced the time that the Legislature has to consider these amendments from 12 months to now less than two months.

This impedes the ability of MPPs to do our job, and may mean that the issues at hand don't get proper consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a pleasure to speak on this amendment to the Mental Health Act here today.

I know that the member from St. Catharines has addressed this as an issue that's in response to a court ruling, but I think we all agree here that this issue is much larger. Mental health is a very serious issue that I would say every single person who represents a riding in Ontario has had people come into their office to talk about.

I know that in my riding, I often speak to people about issues in relation to loved ones, or personal issues, around mental health. I know it's something that has even affected my family.

I think it's important for us to make these changes because the protection of a person's rights is obviously something that's very important to Ontarians. They represent Canadian values. I hope we can all come together to move this along, to address the issues that were outlined in the court ruling to make sure that we get this right. I believe we can work within this timeline to address these issues.

It was interesting. I had the opportunity this week to go visit the Magna Carta, the document that was produced in 1215. It talked a lot about rights. The entire exhibit at Fort York talked about the rights of people. There was a history of rights in Ontario and Toronto.

It's important that we do get this right, because the rights of the individual are an important piece. I think we can all work together, all three parties, to ensure that we do what's best for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise today to comment on the mental health issues.

I don't think anybody in this House doesn't have numerous appointments with parents who have issues with loved ones who are being affected with mental health.

This bill, yes, missed this deadline—but it's important to get it right. It will be interesting to see how we can get this through before the end of December. As I said, it has been here a month and we haven't debated it.

Even our own family members have issues, and we see long wait times. It's time this government treats mental health as a health issue, because it really is a problem that affects not only families but communities.

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We're looking forward to seeing this bill passed. We have to weigh the rights of the patient versus the rights of the family. I know that friends of mine come to see us, looking for courts to take action, because they can't control the things that are happening within their own home.

It's a sad case. There's no easy answer, and I don't know what the answer is.

Hopefully, we'll be able to work through this and be able to put a system in place that allows our people who are working in the health care industry to look after the patients to the best of their ability and the best that we can in this great country of ours.

We shouldn't have many of the things that are going on actually going on. We should be able to provide help, provide respite and still look after the needs and the rights of the patient.

I look forward to further debate on this bill and seeing it through. It may be a little late, but at least it does the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister without portfolio has two minutes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for the very thoughtful interventions that were made by each of the members of the Legislature.

Understandably, the opposition, particularly, are going to be critical of the fact that the legislation wasn't brought back earlier. I can tell you that there are a couple of reasons for that. One was the very extensive consultation that went on. Every time the government came forward with a new suggestion, that had to be canvassed with a variety of people as well to get their reaction. It did take a while to go through cabinet committees, longer than many items might. So that was the reason. There was not general agreement. There were a lot of different views that were expressed and, ultimately, this is what came forward. It's still understandable that the opposition would say—because they want to have the opportunity, as do all members, to be able to deal with this in the House.

Particularly those of us who serve here in Toronto—the Legislature is here in Toronto—we look at the streets of Toronto and see many people who are living on the streets who obviously have mental problems. Part of that was the closing of psychiatric hospitals, which everybody agreed was good. But the challenge was, are you prepared to put those services in the community? Those services wouldn't be cheaper, but they would be more effective, and that is the best we can have.

All these things require more resources. Again, if I were sitting in the opposition benches, I would say, "Well, why doesn't the government spend its money more wisely" and so on. That's the mantra that the opposition has, and it's understandable. But for a lot of the things that we're asking people to do in our society, it's going to require more revenue, and that's something nobody ever wants to talk about. There are a lot of challenges out there, and those challenges have to be met by government, and some by private agencies.

But very thoughtful remarks from those who have intervened after the initial speeches.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is indeed a privilege to stand here today to speak on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act.

I think it's important to speak about mental illness. We cannot shy away from it. Mental illness is just as important as physical health, in terms of working with it and improving mental health. Just like we work out to improve our physical being, we have to indeed make sure that every pillar of the foundation is secure in building up and perpetuating good mental health.

Despite the growing understanding in our province, through programs and campaigns such as Bell Let's Talk, I think we need to keep pushing. When we hear the statistics from organizations like the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, saying that only 50% of Canadians would tell a friend or co-worker that they have a family member with a mental illness, that tells me that we need to continue to work to counteract the negative stigma associated with mental illness.

Again, I can't stress it enough: Mental health is just as important as physical health.

When I hear from stakeholders about how members in their organization are afraid to admit to needing help with a mental health issue, for fear of losing their job or the stigma around mental health issues, that tells me we have to work harder. We all know people who have suffered and we can all attest to the support that's needed from family, but it has to extend beyond family and friends and co-workers. We here in this House can do more as well.

Last week, in fact, I had a very informative meeting with some of the folks from the Police Association of Ontario. They told me some shocking stats about the number of officers who have committed suicide across the country this year alone. I believe the number they gave me was 57, and that number is past what is acceptable—57 suicides in one year are 57 too many, and that's just in one sector alone. Our service men and women should not be ignored or forced to feel ashamed that they need help, when they put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe.

In 2009, the PAO had called for the government to develop presumptive legislation that would offer assistance to officers in dealing with possible and manifested cases of PTSD. To my knowledge, nothing has been achieved on this front, since I heard this exact call again last week in my office.

After this meeting, I went back and looked through then-Ontario Ombudsman André Marin's October 2012 report In the Line of Duty, and it shocked me. Many of the problems he identified three years ago, sadly to say, I was just hearing about again last week. The fact that the lack of help available to law enforcement professionals persists today tells me that we have to do better. We have to take their concerns seriously, and we cannot get mired in talking the talk, so to speak. We have to walk the walk as well.

Perhaps if we treated mental illness like we do a broken arm or a physical ailment, people would no longer fear getting treatment. People might no longer allow their symptoms to progress to a point where they cannot

control them, or fail to recognize any longer when they are suffering.

That brings us to why we're here today. This bill is before the House in response to an Ontario Court of Appeal decision issued in December of last year to strike down a part of the Mental Health Act that violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think we can all agree here that no person, no matter what the circumstances, ever deserves to have their rights subverted.

To that end, I'm pleased to speak today towards Bill 122 and lend my voice in service to those who may not be able to speak for themselves.

Under the current format, a patient being held involuntarily for psychiatric care can apply for a hearing when issued their certificate of continuation, which happens after roughly six and a half months, and it must be renewed every three months thereafter. What the bill does address in this instance is the ability of a patient to apply or automatically have their involuntary status reviewed every 12 months, and that's a good step.

We in the PC Party believe that the bill is a good first step forward in addressing many of the current shortcomings in the Mental Health Act. We believe strongly that a patient should have access to advice on what rights they have to request orders regarding their detention.

I want to talk about access to advice. Locally, we have an initiative in Walkerton that is second to none. It's a wonderful legacy that the Cameron family has established to recognize and celebrate their son, who took his life through suicide. This initiative is called Wes for Youth. That legacy is an online help service for everyone throughout southwestern Ontario, especially geared toward teenagers and young adults who need advice on next steps. Wes for Youth is an example of a community caring for their young people. I think we here in this House are demonstrating that we too care, and that Bill 122, as I said, is a good first step forward.

Specifically, we believe that a patient involuntarily detained for mental health treatment, under the recommendation of medical professionals, should be able to transfer facilities; be given a leave of absence for a designated period of time; receive different security privileges in or outside the facility; be afforded the opportunity to have access, whether supervised or unsupervised, to the community; and have access to vocational, interpretive or rehabilitative services, should they wish. But—and I want to stress this point—this must be done only in the event that a licensed, trained psychiatrist gives their professional medical opinion that it is reasonable and logical to do so.

1010

I firmly believe—and this is something that I have said time and again—that we must follow science. We must always look to the professionals and the experts on what is the best course of action. Sadly, I've seen all too often in my time here at Queen's Park that this current government ignores the facts that they are presented with, or they shun the organizations that have presented data that fails to support the government's opinion.

To that end, Speaker, we must trust the Consent and Capacity Board, the CCB, to make the decisions and exercise the authority that they have been entrusted with. A body charged with determining the mental stability of a person and the level of freedom they can enjoy while residing in a mental health care facility will not fail to factor in conditions such as the safety of the public, the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care for the patients and others, the overall mental condition of the patient and any needs they may have, or the possibility of reintegrating the patient into society. In fact, they may take into consideration conditions that we may not have previously considered at all. We have to trust the experts.

We want to ensure that the people who need help are getting it, not because we want to remove them from society but because we want to engage them in it and make them productive, included members of our communities.

We here on this side as the PC Party, the opposition, agree with some of these changes as long as they are working for the benefit of the people whom this act is designed to serve and allow them access to society on some level, if medically recommended.

This government had a year to address the justice's decision, and instead, they didn't introduce any sort of legislation until September 23. Mr. Speaker, the judge ordered a deadline of December 23, and, given the parliamentary calendar, we have just nine weeks to debate this legislation—four weeks if you only consider what little time we have left. That's hardly enough time to conduct consultations with the relevant stakeholders or consider all of the implications that these amendments might have. This government truly has to get back on track with their consultations.

I have said numerous times that this government has a bad habit of excluding relevant stakeholders from sitting at the consultation table. They have done it time and time again. My colleague in the PC caucus, our health critic, Jeff Yurek, has been in touch with numerous psychiatrists who have expressed their frustration at not being asked for their input on the subject. They have every right to be upset. They bring serious issues to the table that this government should not and cannot ignore.

The changes fail to address the current limitations of the CCB as an expert tribunal on mental health by not allowing treatment to begin once the CCB has rendered a decision. The CCB is a panel of medical professionals, lawyers and public members who are experienced "in interpreting and applying legislation with specific knowledge of the Mental Health Act, Health Care Consent Act, 1996, Substitute Decisions Act, Personal Health Information Protection Act, Mandatory Blood Testing Act and Statutory Powers Procedure Act."

By failing to consider the concerns of these psychiatrists and specialists who are involved with mental health patients on the ground, this government has told them that the professional opinion they've been hired to render and the opinion of the CCB are worthless and that they know better; the government knows better. This is un-

acceptable. Again, we have to bring the right people to the table, we have to let the experts lead by their experience and we have to work with them, not exclude them.

In fact, the very recommendation that I just spoke about was brought forth when the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions held deputations in April 2010. I believe there were a number of recommendations brought forth between 2009 and 2010 when the committee met, but we are just getting to this now with four weeks to go, when we're responsible for ensuring that 339 patients continue to receive the care that their medical professionals deem necessary.

We talked about having a year since the judge ordered this amendment, but the truth is that this government had five—almost six—years to work out the details and engage advocacy groups on the matter. Yet they chose instead to do it in the eleventh hour, when they could claim that they had no time to talk to anyone about it, and that's just not acceptable. While they've been dragging their feet, Ontarians continue to struggle to get the help they need. Each year, roughly one in five Canadians experiences a mental health issue, working out to roughly 175,000 full-time workers absent from work due to mental illness. This translates into a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I have to interrupt the member. It's 10:15. We'll continue later; we'll start with you again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario entitled An Assessment of Ontario's Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize Jacob McCreery, who is in the gallery with us today. Jacob got a very early start this morning driving in with me from the great riding of Oxford. He's here for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Incidentally, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, my own children didn't want to come with me anymore, so I brought one of my constituents. I want to welcome Jacob to Queen's Park.

I also wanted to recognize the family of page Abby Moreside, whose parents Kathy and Dave Moreside are here in the gallery again today and are joined by Abby's aunt Theresa Moreside. Thank you again for coming to Queen's Park. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You can also bring your nephew.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you.

It's with great pride and honour that I introduce a good friend, Chief Reg Niganobe from the Mississauga First Nation in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, Chief.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to welcome Sarah Porter and Emma Stoyles to question period today. They are here in the program Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Steve Clark: Nous avons des délégués de la communauté franco-ontarienne avec nous aujourd'hui, et ils sont assis dans la galerie des membres. Je souhaite la bienvenue à Peter Hominuk, directeur général de l'Assemblé de la francophonie de l'Ontario; Alain Dupuis, directeur général du Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien; Geneviève Borris; Rym Ben Berrah; Lucas Egan; Éric Desrochers; Jérémie Spadafora; Geneviève Latour; et Sylvain Bérubé. Ils sont tous ici pour promouvoir une université francophone. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I am delighted to welcome Daryl Frimer, who is a constituent from the wonderful riding of Parkdale-High Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce Chris May, the director of government relations for the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, who has brought his son Daniel May to the Legislature today. They are sitting in the members' gallery on the east side.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce today Valerie Ingilis from Petrolia, Ontario, in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. She is sitting in the east members' gallery and is taking part in Diabetes Day at Queen's Park. November is National Diabetes Awareness Month.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day, and I'm pleased that in the members' gallery, shadowing me today, is Georgia Jordanov from Earl Haig Secondary School in North York. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today I want to introduce Karine Benzacar, the mother of page Nicole Haim from Thornhill. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to welcome my daughter Claire here. It's Take Our Kids to Work Day. Today should be inspiring for her, I hope.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to introduce Michael Psychogios, the son of a good friend of mine who is here today as well for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome, Michael.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A unique take on Take Our Kids to Work Day: I'd like to welcome Ashley Paisiovich here today. She is accompanied by her father, George, on a unique Take Our Kids to Work Day. George worked here years ago, and he's going to give Ashley a great perspective on what goes on here at Queen's Park and how people interact with members.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce today's page captain, Kyle Preuss, who is small in stature but is

certainly big on service to this Legislature. He will be joined by his father, Brian Preuss, here this afternoon.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would like to recognize Audrey Musselman and Sue McEwen, who are two retired teachers from the great riding of Kitchener Centre. They won a "lunch with your legislator" raffle. Thank you very much.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce my executive assistant from the constituency office in North Bay, Andrea Stoppa.

Mr. Steve Clark: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day, and I'd like to welcome Kaman Tomé. He's a grade 9 student from Humberside Collegiate. His aunt Dianne has brought him to work in my office today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Kaman.

Mme France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter le président du RÉFO, M. Alain Dupuis; le président de l'AFO, M. Denis Vaillancourt; des représentants de la FESFO, Jérémie Spadafora et Rym Ben Berrah; ainsi que plusieurs francophones qui sont ici pour parler université francophone. Bienvenue.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like members to welcome Tyler Vis. He is participating in the Take Our Kids to Work Day. He is a former page with the Legislative Assembly and has joined us today. Please welcome him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a generic welcome, just so that members know, there are plenty of students here today, watching their parents who work here at the Legislature. We welcome them as well.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Financial Accountability Officer released another damning report this week, this time about your government's promise to balance the budget by 2017-18. His conclusion was this: If revenue and spending continue as they have been for the past four years, your government will run a deficit of \$3.5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, they've backed themselves into a corner. They have no way out, other than to raise taxes or cut services. Will the Minister of Finance tell us exactly what taxes he's going to raise and what services he is going to cut?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to first acknowledge and thank the Financial Accountability Officer for his report. We have a strong working relationship, recognizing that we want full transparency and integrity in the work that we're doing. That is being recognized and acknowledged by the FAO. He further says the following: "The province would appear to be on track to beat its 2015-16 deficit target." That is what he says. He says that in the last three years following the recession, Ontario

has been able to achieve “steady improvements in its fiscal position.”

We are exceeding our targets. We have for the past six years running. We’ll continue to do what’s necessary in light of the challenges that face us, as we have every year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Finance: Really? You’re thanking the Financial Accountability Officer for saying that your numbers don’t add up?

What is more remarkable is what this government calls the plan for Ontario. Health funding has grown by 3% on average in the past, but the government will now have to cut that in half. How? The Financial Accountability Officer says through “measures to reduce physician fees.”

Education funding is projected to be cut in half as well. How? The FAO says “through measures to consolidate school space.”

Other programs are supposed to decline by 6.1%. How? The Financial Accountability Officer says through the elimination of Ontario’s Clean Energy Benefit.

Mr. Speaker, they want to cut funding to doctors, close needed schools and raise hydro rates, all because of their incompetence. Is this acceptable?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, if I recall, comes from the Harper holdovers. This is a man who did not respect the parliamentary officers’ reports and their work. We do.

He further goes on to talk about all the work that’s necessary to recalibrate our spending, things that we have achieved and are continuing to do. We’re being targeted and we’re being strategic. What they offered in the past was across-the-board cuts, harmed our recovery—

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it’s any more than this, I’ll move as quickly as I can to an area I don’t like to but that I will use.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I understand he doesn’t like to talk about the past, because the past doesn’t suit his needs. But the fact of the matter is, when he was in the federal government, they had tremendous surpluses that were left over. They squandered it. They went through multiple deficits, doubled their debt, and we still today are looking for that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Finance: dodge, deny, deflect, blame everyone else. Defend your own ideas. If you believe in your plan, defend it. Don’t blame and attack others.

The FAO says that the government won’t meet their revenue projections this year, and they’ll come up short on revenue every year until 2017-18. Even if you continue to gut health and education, you won’t achieve balance. Even if you continue to raise hydro rates to record heights, you won’t achieve balance.

Mr. Speaker, when you think about it—\$1.1 billion wasted on the gas plants, \$2 billion on smart meters, \$1.1 billion on eHealth and another billion on Ornge. If you combine all the scandals, that’s over \$4 billion. That’s your deficit right there. Is this acceptable? Admit to the House that we’re in this situation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

I just want to remind the member: third person to the Chair. And I will remind all members that the debate is better controlled and has more substance when you use third person—tested and true—to the Chair, both answer and question.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The mess that was left was a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit when we took over. The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, I’ll remind you that you don’t know when I’m going to decide to talk to somebody. I also want to say that it’s not helpful when all sides yell back and forth. It’s not productive,

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the gesture doesn’t work.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The FAO goes on to say that he expects that we will meet our deficit targets, that we are exceeding our balance year over year, that we have achieved tremendous results in the face of challenging times—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think it’s time for the FBI.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —and that requires determination and a balanced approach in achieving those results. That’s exactly what we have been doing, contrary to what they’ve done in the past.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the finance minister. This morning, the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed what the Ontario PC caucus has been saying for nearly two years: You have a multi-billion-dollar hole in your budget. The FAO expects a \$3.5-billion deficit in 2017-18, the year you told Ontarians that you’d balance. In fact, he said that it could be \$7.4 billion, if the numbers are even more wrong than current. He also affirmed that “economic growth in 2015 is expected to be significantly slower than projected” and will result in up to \$1 billion less in revenue than expected this year.

So, Speaker, is the minister raising taxes, or can we expect more cuts to health care?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There’s a hole in your budget, dear Sousa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite wants to know if the Financial Accountability Office—so allow me to do so.

It says on page 2, “The government’s history of managing program spending below budget projections should more than offset the impact of lower revenue....” He further says that it appears that the province is on track to beat its deficit target. He also says, “In the three years following the recession, Ontario was able to achieve steady improvements in its fiscal position, reducing the deficit....” He goes on to explain that there are times that are challenging.

We recognize that. We’ve been saying that all along. As a result, we have had to redo and recalibrate our spending. That is why we have a line-by-line program review of all that we do—in a strategic way, not across-the-board cuts as proposed by the opposition, but ensuring that we stimulate the economy, ensuring that we protect those programs, and ensuring that we balance the books by 2017–18, as we are doing, and we’re on target to do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I don’t know what book the minister read, but in the book that we were given, his numbers are wrong.

The FAO expects a \$3.5-billion deficit. We’ve been telling them they’re wrong, and today the FAO confirmed that. In order to balance, he said, you have to reduce the deficit at “a rate of improvement nearly four times greater than the pace of the past four years.”

It’s clear that this repeated pattern of scandal and mismanagement is now coming home to roost for the people of Ontario. Ontario is at real risk of being stuck in a perpetual deficit under their watch.

Speaker, will the fall economic statement recognize the fiscal risks pointed out by the officer this morning and provide realistic numbers, unlike the fluffy projections we have been getting for the past two years?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Conference Board of Canada has consistently, year over year, reaffirmed that Ontario’s representation and integrity of our numbers outpaced the rest of Canada.

We have been very open. We have, in all economic statements and in our budgets, been very clear about what those challenges are, what it is that we must do in order to achieve our balance. We have also been clear that we must invest in those initiatives that make us competitive, long term.

The member opposite would rather we fill in those very holes, that Eglinton Crosstown—the Minister of Transportation only today recognized the importance of making those investments, under budget, for the benefit of the people of Ontario. They didn’t want to do that. They don’t want to invest. They don’t want to provide for economic stimulus. They would rather we go back in time and, Mr. Speaker, we’re not going to do that.

We are looking forward to promoting more growth in the province of Ontario and balancing our books at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Last week, the officer told us that the Hydro One sale will make Ontario’s books look better this year and then fall off the cliff in the years ahead. He has basically now reconfirmed that in his forecast today. This is important, because he stated Ontario’s revenue would be reduced by \$2 billion in 2016–17 and reduced by a further \$2.8 billion in 2017–18.

We know that their own law puts the asset proceeds into general revenues, not directly into the Trillium Trust. Now we know that they’re going to pay for this fiscal mismanagement with the Hydro sale, instead of infrastructure.

So I ask the minister to come clean. Isn’t the Hydro One sale really just a way to get one-time cash to cover over your record of waste, scandal and mismanagement before the next election?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It’s obvious that the critic for finance hasn’t really read the report. He’s making assumptions on Hydro One’s asset, which is not even baked into these conditions. He references—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie, come to order. Thank you.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have been very clear that, dollar for dollar, all of those proceeds are being reinvested into infrastructure, and that has been stated and reaffirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer in his first report, no less.

What the member opposite fails to see, or wishes not to, is in fact that we have taken steps necessary to control our spending. We have become the lowest-cost government anywhere in Canada as a result of those initiatives that we have taken. The FAO report has also affirmed that to be so.

We must do more to promote revenue, and we must do more to control our spending. We are doing all of that, and we will continue to do so.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today, Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer showed that the only way the Liberals can keep their promise to balance the budget is with more cuts.

The 2015 budget froze hospital budgets. We have seen what that looks like: firing nurses, closed beds and hospitals in gridlock. The FAO says that the only way the government can meet its targets is to cut even more. So how many more doctors and nurses will the Liberals be firing? How many more hospital beds will they close? 1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Actually, the FAO report noted that, in fact, controlled spending has occurred in this province. He has indicated that we have had to do some tough decisions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time; member from Leeds-Grenville, first.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And he further noted that we have increased funding for health care, education and social programs that are so critical in our society. But we're doing it in a very controlled manner and we're ensuring that we don't compromise the services that are important to Ontarians, while ensuring we also balance the books and take the necessary steps to be financially viable for the long term.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals' 2015 budget froze education spending, and we've seen the chaos that this has created. But the FAO says that to keep the promise to balance the books, the government will have to further slash education funding and close even more schools. We've already seen education workers fired and schools closed in communities across this province.

How much more chaos will children and families have to endure as this government continues to fire education workers and close schools?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The leader of the third party—it seems her favourite word of all time is "can't." She says we can't balance, she says we can't maximize value of public assets, and she says we can't make investment in public transit, in her own community no less. It's obvious that she's so negative that she can't even keep her team happy, and I can't blame them either.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Are you serious, Gilles?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am. Let's make sure the tone stays the way it should be in this place.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the last budget, the government planned to slash over \$3 billion in services over the next three years. Now the FAO says that the Liberals will have to cut even deeper in order to keep their promise. We've already seen nurses fired, education workers fired, hospital beds closed, schools closed. What other services are families in Ontario going to be losing with this government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The FAO said the following, "In the three years following the recession, Ontario was

able to achieve steady improvements in its fiscal position"—that was on page 8. He said that health care spending increased by 1.8%, well below the previous average pace of 3%, however, it's increasing as opposed to decreasing; and education spending is projected to grow by 1.3%, nearly half the pace of previous years, but increasing still.

Spending in other programs is declining as necessary to ensure that we provide the appropriate services while still balancing the books, and we are doing just that. We are increasing and providing support where it's necessary, ensuring that we provide the services the people of Ontario depend upon. We'll continue to do that.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. When the Premier first announced her scheme to sell off Hydro One, Ed Clark said it was worth \$15 billion. But the FAO showed that as of October, it's only worth \$11.9 billion. That's a gap that will have to be filled if the Premier is going to keep her promise to build transit.

Will this government be slashing from other areas, putting another revenue-generating public asset on the auction block, or will they be breaking their promise to build transit and infrastructure? Will this Acting Premier tell us exactly how the Liberals are going to make up the difference?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The market has priced the deal and it's at the high end, so the gap that you speak of isn't the case. But notwithstanding, what's important to note is the tremendous amount of capital infusion into the Trillium Trust is being dedicated dollar for dollar for public transit and for the projects of priority in our municipalities to ensure that's reinvested so we can get greater returns.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that every dollar we invest in infrastructure and in these programs produces about \$1.43 back. That's much more than the current rate of return on Hydro One. At the same time, we own Hydro One, and we'll get the benefit of that appreciation of values as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, when the Premier announced the plan to sell off Hydro One, she claimed that it would reduce the provincial debt. In fact, the sell-off will increase the debt. People won't pay less for electricity; they're going to be paying more. In the long term, it will mean less money, not more, for services that Ontarians rely on, like health care and education. It barely scratches the surface of what this province needs to invest in infrastructure and transit.

Will the Acting Premier and the Liberal government admit that Ontarians and the independent watchdogs are right, the government is wrong, and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the FAO even this morning reaffirmed the fact that while he was evaluating Hydro One, he did so on a stand-alone basis. He didn't

look at the merits, and he said specifically that he wasn't going to.

But others have. Independent writers from the Globe and Mail, the Post and others have noted that the returns that will accrue to the province are much greater. The net benefit will be better for the province after we do this transaction.

He says the following: "This report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision" of Hydro One. He fully states, "The results of this analysis are sensitive to the timing of subsequent" activity, recognizing that there is more to be done in replacement of that forgone revenue. He says the "forecasts are subject to change in the financial performance of Hydro One," which is obvious because we know Hydro One can do better. The impact on the balanced budget would depend on marketing conditions and policy decisions around the repayment of the sector and debt.

I can assure everyone in this House that the transaction that's going to follow in the next few days—\$1 billion of that goes to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Financial Accountability Officer said the Hydro One sell-off won't raise the money that the Premier promised. It won't lower debt like the Premier promised. Every time we learn something new about the Hydro One sell-off, the deal gets worse and worse for Ontarians.

How bad does this deal have to get for the people of Ontario before this Liberal government does the right thing, steps up to the plate and pulls the plug on this terrible deal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, in the Post today it talks about Hydro One and the upside of the sale. Maybe I can refer the member opposite to review and look at what other experts are saying with regard to this transaction. She's only harping on the forgone revenue, which we acknowledged would be the case, as we provide in our prospectus and the report. But it is being mitigated and replaced by greater revenue and greater returns to the province on the other side.

The transaction pays down substantive debt, lowers costs, lowers interest and lowers risk to the government. It retains ownership of Hydro One to benefit us from the appreciation in value and possible dividends.

We're also the government that will tax the system on an ongoing basis in the future. All of that is being retained, being protected, and the people and the ratepayers will still have the benefit of the OEB to control any exposure to the consumers.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Speaker, it's clear the

minister intends to amend the Municipal Act to allow all municipalities to create a land transfer tax. This will double the amount of land taxes due at closing on the average home in Ontario to over \$10,000.

For many Ontarians, this will crush their dreams of owning their own home. That's why yesterday I tabled my motion calling on this House to take a stand against any new municipal land transfer taxes.

Is the minister so out of touch with the struggles of Ontario families that he thinks they have an extra \$10,000 under the mattress to pay his double-dipping land tax?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I take no advice from the party that downloaded billions of dollars in services to the property tax base.

The member opposite knows very well that we are currently reviewing the Municipal Act and listening to input—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Again, I comment on the conversation that seems to be deteriorating and against what I've asked for in terms of names. It's highly inappropriate, guys.

Let's finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What this is about, and what I'm asking myself and asking Ontarians to think about, is this: Do our municipalities have the tools they need to provide for the services their citizens want, and what options can municipalities have to get the job done?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont, second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Ontarians are sick and tired that the answer to every single question facing this government is to invent a new tax—a carbon tax, commuter tax, beer tax, pension tax. It all adds up to tax increases of \$30.8 billion on their watch.

Now they want to tax the dream of home ownership. My motion says that enough is enough. Just because the minister has no plan to manage the issues raised by municipalities, that doesn't give him the right to download the burden onto the backs of hard-working young families. Either the minister believes they should have the same ability as their parents and grandparents to save for their own home, or he doesn't. Will he prove it, if he does, by supporting my motion on December 3?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Please finish.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We haven't made any decisions yet. We're listening carefully. But at the end of the day, it's municipalities that need to decide what works best for their communities. That's their job as responsible leaders.

I think it's time that my friend came clean about his real motives here. His party has always stood for downloading more and more responsibilities to municipalities without any thought about how they're supposed to deliver those services. As a former mayor of a small municipality, I am keenly aware of the damage caused by the previous PC government, which burdened Ontario's 444 municipalities when they downloaded—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes. The way his party treated municipalities when they were in power—they didn't have a ministry of municipal affairs; they had a ministry of downloads—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated.

New question.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Today's FAO report shows that this government plans to balance its books by deeply cutting and slashing program spending because this minister's revenue projections were way off. The 2015 budget showed Ontarians that the government is cutting program spending in real terms by 5.5% in other programs.

Now we have learned from the FAO that programs that are extremely important to the people of this province—Ontario families—like health and education are going to be cut even further. Yesterday, we learned that there are 16,000 children who have autism who are on a wait-list.

Minister, can you shed some light for Ontarians and tell them what program cuts are in store for them?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the member opposite and, again, I appreciate the work done by the FAO in recognizing that there are challenges that the province faces, as does Canada, for that matter, as do other parts and other economies around the world.

Ontario, notwithstanding—the FAO has reaffirmed this—has exceeded its targets. In fact, our ability to gain greater employment was at a faster pace than the United States. Our ability to control spending also outpaced the rest of Canada, but he noted that we are supporting health care and education and social programs.

When it comes to autism, we all recognize the great need that exists in our communities. The province of Ontario has invested over \$140 million in supporting autism. We'll continue to do that. That is not being sacrificed as we proceed to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Minister, you will not balance your books by 2017-18 because your revenue projections—for some reason, you built them into the economic forecasting using the wrong GDP levels. The only way

that you're going to balance your budget in 2017-18 is by hurting the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, since this Liberal government took power, Ontarians have seen hospital budgets frozen, nurses fired, heartbreaking wait-lists growing for services like autism therapy, all of which have had a significant impact on the people of this province.

With today's FAO report showing significant risk in this government's fiscal plan, I have to ask the minister: What cuts are coming? Will more nurses be fired? Will more schools be closed? Will poverty funding be cut again? The people of this province have a right to know what's in store for them.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the comments made are just untrue.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: No. The fact is, we have based our assumptions and our forecasts on economists from across Canada. We've taken their projections and we pared them down by an additional point. We did so every year. In fact, last year, revenues were down by \$2.2 billion and still we exceeded our targets because of what we had to do to recalibrate and control our spending. We'll continue to do that even now.

Contrary to what the member just said, the FAO very clearly stated that we're on track, that we're able to meet our targets notwithstanding some of the challenges before us.

Furthermore, it is questionable how it is—and it's why it's so difficult—that the member opposite only sees it from one point of view. We must take a balanced point, Mr. Speaker, and that's to ensure that we look at the benefits and the work that's necessary to support the people of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move on, let's make something clear: On the edge, there are always insinuations, whether they are—that we can't say it if we say it right out, and if you try to say it in another way. I'm just going to ask all members, including the minister, that it's pretty obvious that there could be an insinuation in what was just said. I'm going to caution all members to stop trying to find words that you think you can say.

Interjection: Ask him to withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you don't mind, I'd like to rule.

I'm asking the minister to withdraw, under the premise that I did think that it was an inappropriate comment.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm using this as a moment for all moments to make an attempt to try to elevate the debate. No matter what, that should be your first focus.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Something that I have heard consistently from my constituents in Etobicoke Centre is how important it

is that we manage taxpayer dollars wisely and that we balance the budget so that we can continue to invest in the services that the people of Ontario need and rely on. That's why I'm so proud to work with the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance and other members of caucus to make sure we do just that. I'm someone who's a management consultant, someone who has taught at York University in the business school, and I share the view of my constituents that this is truly important.

On that note, Minister, I understand that this morning the Financial Accountability Officer released a report titled An Assessment of Ontario's Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Providing independent analysis on the state of Ontario's economy is a key component of Mr. LeClair's mandate. I know that our government first established this office in 2013 to further our commitment to fiscal transparency and accountability. I believe that Ontario is the only province in Canada to appoint such an officer.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could you please provide my constituents and the people of Ontario with your update on the report released this morning by the Financial Accountability Officer?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member for the question. I first want to thank Stephen LeClair, Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer, for his report. The FAO serves an important public service in providing independent analysis to the assembly about the state of the province's finances. I enjoy a positive working relationship with Mr. LeClair and I welcome and value his independent analysis of our province's finances.

The FAO's report released today affirms our 2015-16 deficit target. This is the lowest deficit projection in Ontario since the onset of the global recession. Mr. LeClair further acknowledges in his analysis that eliminating the deficit by 2017-18 is achievable, and highlights that the province will be on track to beat this deficit target yet again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Back to the Minister of Finance: I'm pleased to hear that our government has established a good working relationship with Mr. LeClair's office and I'm glad that Mr. LeClair has affirmed a few things. One is our ability to balance the budget in one of his scenarios—agree that we'll meet our deficit target of \$8.5 billion for 2015-16 and acknowledge that we have managed program spending below budget projections.

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However, I'm sure, Minister, that the people I represent in Etobicoke Centre would like to hear a little bit more about the specifics of the report. I understand that Mr. LeClair's report focuses on Ontario's fiscal and economic situation, taking into account projections in our 2015 budget. The report also examines certain economic trends over the past 15 years to provide historical context for the province's fiscal outlook.

Minister, could you please comment on Ontario's progress, both on an economic and on a fiscal basis?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you again to the member for the question. Ontario's economy continues to grow at a modest pace, despite a challenging and changing global landscape.

In his report, the FAO points at several external factors over the last decade that have had an impact on Ontario's economy. However, the FAO states that following the recession, "employment rebounded relatively quickly" in Ontario. He also pointed out that "the pace of Ontario's job recovery following the global recession was much quicker than in the US or other G7 countries."

From a fiscal perspective, the FAO also applauds our ability to manage program spending. In his report, he points out, on page 12, that "in 2013-14 and 2014-15, program spending was \$1.2 billion lower each year than the original budget plan projection.... As a result, it is reasonable to expect the government will continue to be able to manage program spending for 2015-16 below the original budget plan...."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the FAO once again for his hard work, and I look forward to continuing our positive relationship.

PESTICIDES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Yesterday, we heard from Ontario's Acting Environmental Commissioner that this Liberal government has been ignoring the small things that matter. Speaker, we all know why: They're so busy being preoccupied managing their blunders, like the sell-off of Hydro One, and scandals, like the Sudbury by-election, rather than being busy with the environment.

In her report, the commissioner highlighted several areas that the government is failing our environment, one being that "the many gaps in knowledge that still exist on this subject [of neonicotinoids] need to be addressed promptly." She goes on to state, "The ECO encourages the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to fund independent research examining neonicotinoids, and their effects on food chains and ecosystems from an Ontario perspective."

My question for the minister should have a straightforward answer. Does he agree with the Environmental Commissioner and that there needs to be more Ontario-focused, science-based research conducted with regard to neonicotinoids?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite. It's a peculiar question, since the Environmental Commissioner's report last year demanded that the government take action to reduce neonicotinoids, based on the large volume of evidence globally.

In the intervening year, from Harvard University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Sussex and the University of Toronto, there is a larger body of re-

search on neonicotinoids. As a matter of fact, we're doing research on our water systems, and Quebec is in the middle of major research, where they found systemic neurotoxic pesticides in all 20 of their rivers.

We have said that we're applying the precautionary principle. We continue to monitor, support and work with the best research centres in the world. The evidence is on the side of the prudent action we are taking, which is to start to reduce, annually, the amount of this very dangerous toxin.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Clearly, Speaker, the minister's puffed-up rhetoric is showing that he is continuing to ignore the Environmental Commissioner. She has specifically asked the minister to conduct Ontario-based, science-based research, and you know what, Speaker? We need to see this minister focusing in on the policies regarding neonicotinoids here in Ontario. But this Liberal government is moving ahead, without the facts, and they're banning them in the agricultural sector.

My question to the minister is this: Will he heed the advice and the recommendation from the Environmental Commissioner, and will he agree to halt the ban on neonicotinoids until Ontario-based research is completed? That is what the commissioner is asking for. Will he do it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't know where the member opposite has been. There have been several studies published on Ontario, including by Purdue University. The member should read some of the things I sent her, because of the 19 studies done by Purdue University, one of the leading agricultural universities, five of them were done in Ontario. Sussex university—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows better than to do that, and I would like to hear the answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —Sussex university, Guelph university, the University of Minnesota—Dr. Marla Spivak, one of the world's leading experts.

Mr. Speaker, we're not banning them. That is completely not true. I have visited about three dozen farms; I've talked to farmers. There are many farmers that are using it. What the opposition is proposing is that we should use pesticides prophylactically where there are not wireworms and there are not grubs.

Could the member explain why we should use pesticides where the very pests that they're supposed to address are not even present? Because that's the position of her party.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Acting Premier. Let's take a trip down memory lane on this government's record of wait-lists for autism services. In 2004, the Deputy Premier said, "The waiting lists are simply too long and there are too many kids who aren't getting what they need." Five years later, the Deputy

Premier said that "clearly the wait-list is not acceptable." Yesterday, the same Deputy Premier suggested that 16,000 kids on a wait-list for autism services was government progress.

The government cannot plead ignorance. They have known for years about the devastating impact of these wait-lists. Will the Acting Premier admit that this government has failed kids with autism and their families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I sincerely appreciate the question and the concerns that we all share in this House.

I understand that families caring for young people with autism indeed face unique challenges. We recognize that wait-lists for services remain a concern. In recent years, the prevalence of autism has increased from one in 100 to one in 68 children. We're working hard to address this issue because we know that we need to make further progress for these children, especially for their families.

Our government has introduced a range of programs, as the member knows, to help children and youth with autism, to build system capacity, to improve supports in schools, and support families. This year, we're investing over \$190 million in autism services, an increase of over \$100 million since 2004.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Acting Premier: Yesterday, the Minister of Children and Youth Services said that she didn't think there was a decrease in the number of spots available for ABA and IBI services, but the estimates show that the number of spaces has decreased for ABA services.

Families have made plea after plea to this minister to deal with the wait-list, to ensure that kids are getting the supports they need. Parents and kids have had enough. They've had enough excuses; they've had enough talk; they've had enough studies; they've had enough panels. Now is the time for action.

Will the Acting Premier instruct the minister to immediately end wait-lists for children with autism?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think one of the things we need to recognize is that there's a variety of ways in which children with autism are supported. One of the things that we have done is we've actually invested in ABA specialists in each school board. Those ABA specialists at each school board are able to work with the teachers, the EAs and the spec ed consultants to make sure that can be incorporated into the programs, into the specialized support that each student has.

There is more than one way to support the needs of a child with autism. They actually have quite different needs. That's how the school system deals with the school-age kids: to look at the needs of the individual child and provide appropriate—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

M. Grant Crack: Ma question est pour la meilleure ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Cette semaine, partout en Ontario et au Canada, les communautés francophones célèbrent la troisième Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone. C'est l'occasion de mettre en avant les réalisations de notre gouvernement.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous mettre à jour sur les contributions du gouvernement en ce qui a trait à l'immigration francophone en Ontario?

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L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais remercier le bon député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, qui est un fier défenseur des droits des francophones. Je voudrais aussi prendre l'occasion de féliciter le nouveau ministre de la Citoyenneté et de l'Immigration, John McCallum, qui vient d'être nommé ministre.

Notre gouvernement travaille très fort sur le dossier de l'immigration francophone. En Ontario, nous recevons le plus d'immigrants francophones hors Québec. Nous accueillons en fait 16 fois plus d'immigrants francophones que le Nouveau-Brunswick et neuf fois plus que le Manitoba.

Les choses avancent de bon pas. En juin 2015, nous avons établi un groupe d'experts francophones pour faire des recommandations à notre gouvernement. Nous comptons d'ailleurs sur le gouvernement fédéral et M. le ministre McCallum pour qu'ils nous aident à atteindre notre cible de 5 %. En retour, nous l'aiderons à atteindre sa cible d'immigration francophone hors Québec de 4,4 %.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

M. Grant Crack: Merci encore à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones pour sa réponse. La question de l'immigration est, comme vous le savez, une question importante pour l'ensemble de la communauté francophone. Au printemps dernier, nous avons annoncé un objectif de 5 % d'immigration francophone en Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, je souhaiterais que la ministre nous explique comment nous allons atteindre cet objectif.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oui, en fait, nous avons cette cible de 5 % et nous travaillons en étroite collaboration avec le ministère des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international.

Entre autres, nous avons développé une stratégie de promotion et de recrutement international francophone en Europe et en Afrique. Nous travaillons avec Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada et leur nouveau système électronique, appelé Entrée express, pour gérer des demandes d'immigration économique, et nous finançons un portail Internet qui met en valeur 19 communautés à travers l'Ontario pour y favoriser l'immigration francophone. Je vous assure que le travail est acharné et que notre gouvernement poursuit ce travail-là.

J'étais tout récemment en France aussi pour inviter les gens, les Français, parce qu'on ne sait pas qu'il y a une communauté francophone et qu'on peut travailler ici en Ontario en français. Alors, je les invitais à venir soit

ouvrir une «business» ici ou à immigrer, tout simplement. Merci.

PROBATION SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Attorney General. There's a quote that I'd like to read: "Ontario communities must ... remain safe. Because every child in this province should be able to walk home without fear, and no parent should face an unthinkable loss." That was a promise that the Premier made in the throne speech in 2013.

Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton had families—families that have suffered an unthinkable loss. Despite this promise, the fact is crown attorneys aren't even notified when convicted offenders refuse to sign their probation orders.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General explain why crown attorneys are not being told when offenders refuse to sign their probation orders?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all—and I'll say this again—this is a real tragedy. Our thoughts continue to be with the families.

As this matter is before the courts, you will understand that I cannot comment on it.

Domestic violence is of concern to all the communities. It is a serious issue that crosses every social boundary and will not be tolerated in Ontario. Our government is committed to continuing to work with violence-against-women organizations and the professional health, education and justice sectors to find ways to prevent domestic violence, to support victims and to address the justice system response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Back to the Attorney General: Ontarians do deserve a criminal justice system that is robust, a system that is far more vigilant and responsive in monitoring dangerous offenders. After what happened in Renfrew county, Ontarians are left with unanswered questions.

The truth is that there were so many things that this government could have done to prevent the tragedy in Renfrew county. The government is adamant that probation orders are enforceable, but Mr. Borutski thumbed his nose at our criminal justice system, and he refused to sign the order. You have an opportunity to make the system better.

My question only needs a simple yes or no: Will the Attorney General issue a directive to the crown attorneys to bring offenders to court when they refuse to sign their probation orders?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you very much.

Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a great question. Again, yesterday, the three ministries involved had a meeting to address exactly this question. The signature of the condition to release someone on probation is not a

condition to keep someone or not release them on probation.

The probation is the decision of the court, and there is the condition—also some are prescribed, some are not prescribed and are added by the judge. Again, the signature of this condition is not a condition to release someone or not.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today, we're visited in the Legislature by Mr. Daryl Frimer, a resident from the constituency of Parkdale–High Park, who owns a home near the UP Express tracks. During the construction of the UPX, significant damage—\$27,000—was done to his home.

This homeowner, like many others living near the rail line, did his due diligence in attaining three quotes from contractors to assess how much repairs would cost. He submitted those quotes to his claim with Metrolinx. However, like in other similar cases, Metrolinx is pressuring Mr. Frimer to accept a settlement that is half of what the quotes said the repair will cost.

Why is Metrolinx refusing to pay people what its own process has determined they are owed?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I do thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for raising this particular question and I respect the fact that the constituent from Parkdale–High Park is here today.

While I personally don't know the specific details of this individual case, I do understand that there has been correspondence that has gone back and forth between the member and Metrolinx regarding this particular case. I think it's also important—every member in this Legislature would recognize the importance—while provincial agencies are responsive to these kinds of requests—that we ensure, for the sake of protecting taxpayers, that the scope of work that's required as a result of something that might have occurred is, in fact, accurate.

My understanding is that this is a process that is still ongoing, but I do appreciate the member standing up for her community and for asking this question today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Frimer is a taxpayer, by the way, and has submitted over 100 emails to Metrolinx at this point.

Metrolinx has also known that the construction of the UP Express would damage nearby homes, yet has refused to take responsibility and adequately compensate all homeowners living near the line. What we've consistently seen since the first piledriving started along the line is that any claim put forward by a homeowner ends up being an absolute nightmare. The homeowner is not only expected to prove that the damage happened as a result of the construction and arrange for three independent quotes from contractors to assess what the damage would cost to fix, but then, whatever that amount ends up being, Metrolinx consistently offers a fraction of that price. This is absolutely unacceptable.

When will Metrolinx start adequately compensating homeowners like Mr. Frimer for damage caused by the construction of the UP Express, which, by the way, runs empty?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: In my follow-up answer to the member from Parkdale my answer essentially remains the same: What I believe in this case is the most important—along with making sure that all provincial agencies, including Metrolinx, are responsive to these kinds of matters that get raised, and very respectful of the challenges that some homeowners in your community and perhaps others are facing—is that we get it right. This, from my perspective, would also mean that the scope of work that's required as a result of something that Metrolinx might have done is actually reflective of the damage itself. There needs to be a very direct correlation between the two.

I respect the fact that some constituents from Parkdale–High Park have provided quotes. My understanding is that Metrolinx continues to work itself through the process. I don't know of the other cases that you're raising in this particular case.

To the member's final point about the UP Express: Let's just remember that's an infrastructure project delivered on time and on budget by this government.

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AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question this morning is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The agri-food industry is an important contributor to our economy and continues to be a priority of our government. Through our government's targeted investments in the agri-food sector, we've been able to foster growth and help companies boost productivity, expand capacity and grow market access for processed goods.

In a fiercely competitive economy, it's important that producers in Ontario have a dynamic and innovative business climate in which they can afford to invest and grow their operations. We know from our stakeholders that one key to expanding production in the province is through processing capacity. Ontario is already one of North America's leading agri-food processing regions.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: What is our government doing to support the food and beverage processing sector in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: First of all, I want to give my sincerest congratulations to the new federal member of Parliament for Peterborough. Maryam Monsef has been named to Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet.

The hard-working member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore asks a very important question in Ontario today. The agri-food sector contributes \$34 billion to Ontario's GDP. Every morning that people get up in Ontario, 780,000 Ontarians are employed in this very important sector. The agri-food processing sector represents 23% of Ontario's manufacturing capacity. The Premier has given this sec-

tor a great challenge: to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. We're on target to make that happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the minister for his excellent answer and for the excellent work that he and his ministry are doing.

It's clear that this government believes in partnering with business to create jobs. I understand that in the last year alone, our government has been able to leverage nearly \$330 million of investment in the province's food processing industry. Through those partnerships, we've also been able to create and retain some 2,200 jobs.

With investments like the Food and Beverage Growth Fund in place for the industry, food processors are even better poised to make a greater contribution to the economy.

Etobicoke is one of the largest clusters of agri-food production in North America and, recently, the minister made an announcement at Lassonde Industries in Etobicoke.

Could the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs tell this House what the government is doing to support companies like Lassonde?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for the supplementary. Indeed, people should know that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area is the second-largest food distribution hub in North America.

Recently, I had the opportunity to be in the wonderful part of Toronto—Etobicoke—to announce an investment of \$1.5 million from the Food and Beverage Growth Fund to Lassonde Industries. They'll be using those investment dollars to create a new high-speed packaging line for Tetra Pak packaging. This will allow them to fill an amazing 24,000 juice packages per hour—that's 18,000 more than what they're currently doing. This investment will help to create 15 new jobs and retain 114 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, did I talk about the impact on the apple growers in Ontario? My good friend Charlie Stevens, who operates Wilmot Orchards in Clarington, Ontario, will be able to sell his apples to Lassonde, a very important initiative.

BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: A year ago today, work stopped on the provincial Highway 3 bridge in Cayuga due to a protest from the confederacy chiefs and their Haudenosaunee Development Institute. Traffic from a main provincial highway is being rerouted on a temporary bridge.

We know this government has a history of throwing money at problems. A couple of questions: How much money has been sanctioned by the Ontario government; how much has been paid to the Haudenosaunee Development Institute to allow construction projects to continue in Haldimand county; and why have protesters shut down

this bridge? Do they have an expectation of payment or further payment from this government? Is the minister planning on paying them to get this bridge finished?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. It's an important issue. It's an important safety issue for all the residents using Highway 3 where the Cayuga bridge spans the Grand River. We are in negotiations and exercising our consultation process efforts with the Six Nations, with the Haudenosaunee, with the contractor involved and, indeed, with the local citizens. We are working very hard to find a solution to this problem.

In the meantime, the bridge does remain open. It is monitored by the contractor involved, Dufferin Construction. There are no immediate safety issues because the bridge is being closely monitored by the contractor. In the meantime, we are continuing our efforts to resolve this issue with all of the interested parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The minister knows that over the past year, I have formally asked for updates six times on construction. We haven't seen the solution yet, obviously.

Also in Haldimand county, work on another bridge, the Caledonia bridge, is planned for next year. Haldimand county council wants the province to postpone work on the Caledonia bridge before it gets started as they fear a repeat of what is presently happening down in Cayuga.

If the Haldimand county councillors see a potential conflict, can the minister tell this House how he thinks there won't be conflict when construction starts on the Caledonia bridge? What is he doing to prevent protesters from blocking construction in Caledonia? Again, will he be arranging payment to the protesters to allow construction of this other bridge, the Caledonia bridge?

Hon. David Zimmer: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for his first answer and also to the member opposite for this question. I know that this question was asked here in the chamber I believe it was a couple of weeks ago by the same member. As I said at that time, just to echo what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs did say, this government, the Ministry of Transportation and all of us on this side of the House take our responsibilities with respect to the duty to consult with First Nations extremely seriously.

At the same time, of course, we do understand the importance of making sure that these connections, these bridges—not only Cayuga but also the other one that the member opposite referenced—remain in good working condition and that we can continue to do work to make sure that we're providing the residents of that part of Ontario with safe transportation routes. We'll continue to do the work that's required with respect to our duty to consult. We'll continue to make sure that these structures remain safe and, as I said a couple of weeks ago, we're happy to provide an update once we are in a position to do so.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care is the province's new cutting-edge psychiatric correctional facility, built using the government's favoured model of public-private partnerships, or P3s. Unfortunately, when I say "cutting-edge," I'm also referring to the recent story of a man brandishing a sword he crafted using materials found in his cell. Since opening in 2014, Waypoint has experienced the same cost overruns, crumbling infrastructure and dangerous work environments that have plagued other P3 correctional facilities such as the Toronto South Detention Centre.

We know from the Auditor General's report last December that public-private partnerships have cost Ontarians more than \$8 billion, and, as we are discovering, new problems arise every day. Who will have to pay for those? Will the Acting Premier please explain why this government thinks that projects that cost more, fall apart and put employees at risk are a good investment for Ontarians?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I appreciate the notion of looking at alternate financing and procurement practices to promote very critical investments into our community, like mental health, like our health care system, like our transportation system, like our education, in order to provide those capital structures to enable us to have greater services. We have, I believe, over 44 out of 45 projects already completed—under budget—and enabling us to have those very necessary investments to support mental health, which is something we want to continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to look at other forms, besides just borrowing. That's what the member opposite is suggesting we should do. We want to find the long-term benefit that has the greatest positive impact for our economy and for our services. We'll proceed to do just that.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I just want to take the opportunity to welcome the Canadian Diabetes Association advocates who are joining us from across Ontario. They're having a reception in the legislative dining room, and I ask everybody to please join us.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just wanted to introduce Robin Dhillon. He's here for Take Our Kids to Work Day for the MPP for Brampton West, Vic Dhillon. Welcome, Robin.

Hon. Bill Mauro: For me as well, with the Canadian Diabetes Association, an old family friend, a great friend of my father's, is here today in the members' east gallery, Jimmy Colosimo. Jimmy, great to see you.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to wish a happy birthday a few days early to my colleague Mr. Steve Clark of Leeds-Grenville. I won't divulge his age. It is on Saturday and he is going to the nation's capital this evening to attend an event, so on behalf of all members, happy birthday, Steve.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, she did it with somebody else.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize Matt Hiraishi from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, who is in the gallery today for the statements on Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. I want to thank him for coming to Queen's Park and for their support for the awareness campaign of the need for carbon monoxide detectors in Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUNRIPE

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate a local business in Sarnia-Lambton on its receipt of a very special award. Sunripe Markets, which was founded in Sarnia-Lambton some 33 years ago, has grown to become one of the premier grocery destinations in southwestern Ontario, with three locations serving Sarnia and London.

On September 29, at the 53rd Annual Canadian Independent Grocer of the Year Awards in Toronto, Sunripe, which is owned by Will and Ingrid Willemsen, was honoured with induction into the great Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers Hall of Fame.

Despite all of the success that Sunripe has experienced over the last three decades, the business model today remains the same as it was 33 years ago: Employ a great staff and provide customers the choice of the freshest produce and finest signature products anywhere.

Owner Will Willemsen can still be found several mornings each week at the Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto. Often, he is the first to arrive at 3 a.m. It is because of that passion for quality that Will ensures he brings home the very best produce for Sunripe customers.

As the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, I would like to congratulate Will, Ingrid and all of the staff of Sunripe on their induction into the Independent Grocers Hall of Fame.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr. Paul Miller: Like many communities in Ontario, the city of Hamilton is suffering from a housing crisis.

Nearly 6,000 families are waiting for subsidized housing. One in five renter households spend more than half their income on rent. That's a lot of people, because almost a third of the households in my riding rent their homes.

Now, on top of our broader housing crisis, we have a pest infestation crisis. There has been a 600% increase in reported bedbug infestations since 2006, and there are especially serious problems in the city's social housing complexes.

Community groups in east Hamilton have recorded numerous problems with bedbugs, cockroaches, ants and mice. The city's social housing agency is now spending more than one eighth of its annual maintenance budget on pest control. The city's board of health has responded by creating a \$1-million pilot project to curtail bedbugs across the city.

I hope that the provincial government will look favourably on any requests the city may make for assistance. Decades of underinvestment in housing have resulted in a chronic state of disrepair in the province's public housing stock. The lack of funding for maintenance is a major contributor to public health problems like pest infestation.

I hope that the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing and of Health and Long-Term Care recognize the long-term health and fiscal benefits to improving living conditions in our public housing stock.

MINUTE MAID BREAKFAST DAY IN CANADA

Ms. Harinder Malhi: While many of us consider breakfast to be a normal start to our day, over 1.15 million Canadian students are at risk of starting their day with an empty stomach. That's one in seven children. Newcomer families and aboriginal children are at even greater risk.

Last month, the Breakfast Club of Canada and Minute Maid teamed up to launch the first-ever Minute Maid Breakfast Day in Canada. This new national initiative will raise awareness about the importance of a balanced breakfast and how it plays a role in student success.

All students should start the day well-nourished and ready to learn. That is why, on October 6, hundreds of Coca-Cola Canada employees launched the Minute Maid Breakfast Day in Canada by volunteering at Breakfast Club of Canada locations in 25 cities across the country. In Ontario, nine schools in seven cities took part in the launch. They included schools in Barrie, Brampton, Hamilton, Kingston, Ottawa, Toronto and Peterborough.

Paul Brennan, the general manager of the Coca-Cola facility in my riding of Brampton-Springdale, and five volunteer employees from Coca-Cola helped out at an event that took place at Massey Street Public School in Brampton.

Breakfast Club of Canada and Minute Maid, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Coca-Cola Ltd., have been partners for 15 years. Minute Maid donates the juice free of charge, which they serve according to Canada's Food

Guide. Together, they support 1,455 Breakfast Club school programs, serving 25 million free breakfasts annually across the country.

Breakfast Day in Canada is an opportunity to highlight this important work and inspire others to get involved and make a difference.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a resolution from the village of Burk's Falls that I want to get on the record.

"Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) announced in May that it is ending the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit (OSEB) program; and

"Whereas the OSEB program was designed to provide unemployed individuals who are or recently have been eligible for employment insurance with income and entrepreneurial support while learning to operate a small business; and

"Whereas the program has a 94% completion rate in Muskoka over the past five years and 76% of the businesses launched five years ago remain open, well above Industry Canada's reported five-year survival rate for small businesses; and

"Whereas the 110 new businesses launched by OSEB graduates in Muskoka in the past five years sustain 142 jobs, demonstrating it is successful in giving participants a pathway to self-employment and is also an important rural economic development tool; and

"Whereas OSEB programs from rural regions across Ontario have reported similar statistics; and

"Whereas MTCU's position that entrepreneurial support is available from other service providers overlooks the fact it has not replaced the essential income-support component;

"Now therefore be it resolved that the village of Burk's Falls recognizes the value of the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit program to rural communities and requests the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities immediately reinstate the program until a formal evaluation—which must include input from delivery agencies and participants—is completed; and further that the ministry ensure any changes to the OSEB program retain both the entrepreneurial and income-support components that have made it successful."

Mr. Speaker, many municipalities in Parry Sound-Muskoka have passed this resolution.

ANNIVERSARY OF SIKH MASSACRE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today, the first week of November, marks 31 years since the Sikh genocide occurred across India. Though this genocide occurred halfway across the world, many of the survivors fled India and settled in this beautiful country of Canada. In fact, many of those survivors settled in my riding.

These are their lived experiences. These are their actual stories of what they went through and what they survived.

The reality is, the story and the experiences of these individuals would seem almost unbelievable if it was placed in a Canadian context. I want to paint the picture for you.

Imagine elected officials in the outskirts of a capital city hiring goons, arming them with weapons, providing them with kerosene—which is very expensive and which most common folks wouldn’t have access to—using city buses to transport these individuals to the areas and neighbourhoods where Sikhs reside, and then using elector voter lists to identify which homes are Sikh residents and which homes are not, and then instructing these goons to go out and target and kill these innocent people simply for their religious affiliation. Imagine that an independent government inquiry confirmed that this heinous act could not have happened but for the organization and planning of elected officials.

This is not imagination. This is the reality of what people suffered. We must always remember this injustice, lest this injustice occur again.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I would like to acknowledge the skill, dedication and collaboration exhibited by first responders in my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries on Tuesday, October 20. While responding to a fire at a rural residence, a Cambridge fire truck and a Waterloo region police vehicle were involved in a collision that resulted in both leaving the road.

While responding to each scene simultaneously stressed available resources, two Cambridge fire trucks stayed behind to assist at the scene of the crash, while another two arrived to battle the blaze. Despite being in pain themselves from the collision, firefighters from the truck involved in the collision worked with their colleagues to remove the police officer from the vehicle. Due to the critical nature of the accident, the region of Waterloo paramedic service and Ornge air ambulance were called in to respond. Police Chief Bryan Larkin confirmed that that officer is now recovering at home.

1510

At the scene of the fire, Cambridge firefighters were successful in limiting fire damage to the residence and later received assistance from the Hamilton and North Dumfries fire services, which provided more water and staff.

Firefighters, police and paramedics provide invaluable service to the citizens of Cambridge and North Dumfries, and indeed all other Ontarians. This incident shows that first responder service is not without risk and sacrifice, as they work to ensure the safety of citizens and still come home at the end of the day. We should all be thankful for their work.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to share a resolution by the township of Melancthon that was endorsed by

Dufferin county regarding opposing the sell-off of Hydro One. The resolution states:

“Whereas the public electricity system in Ontario is a critical asset to the economy and vital to the living standard and well-being of all Ontarians; and

“Whereas it is essential that Ontarians maintain public control and public decision-making with respect to electricity; and

“Whereas experience in other jurisdictions shows that privatization typically means consumers pay more...; and

“Whereas a privatized Hydro One will no longer be subject to scrutiny by the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Financial Accountability Officer, or the Integrity Commissioner, and will no longer be required to provide information or services to citizens under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, or the French Language Services Act; and

“Whereas our public electricity system currently generates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the provincial government every year to help pay for public services we all depend on; and

“Whereas the sale of shares in Hydro One will provide a short-term financial gain for the province in exchange for a much larger long-term financial loss; and

“Whereas the provincial government has no mandate from voters to sell any part of Hydro One...;

“Therefore be it resolved that the township of Melancthon call on the provincial government to:

“—Halt the sale of any part of Hydro One, and maintain Hydro One as a public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians;

“—Strengthen Hydro One by investing in the next generation of workers and upgrading our electricity transmission infrastructure....”

Speaker, the Financial Accountability Officer has also noted that the sale is a bad deal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

LA CITÉ

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Last Saturday, we celebrated a milestone for the francophone community of Ottawa. I had the pleasure of attending le Bal Vert et Blanc, where more than 400 persons gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of La Cité, the largest French-language college in Ontario.

We have to be proud that in 2015, le collège La Cité has been the home of 30,000 graduates since their opening in 1990. As you’re well aware, monsieur le Président, French education has always been a priority for our government, and that achievement of La Cité makes us very proud.

J’aimerais remercier et féliciter la présidente de cette grande institution collégiale, M^{me} Lise Bourgeois, pour son leadership et son engagement à l’éducation en français. La soirée fut le moment de célébrer en grand les 25 ans de réussite pour l’éducation postsecondaire en

français et de féliciter les 30 000 diplômés de La Cité depuis son ouverture.

Nous devons être fiers comme Ontariennes et Ontariens de dire haut et fort que La Cité est un collège solide, moderne, ouvert sur le monde et engagé dans la société.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I appreciate the opportunity to reference climate change. Ontario's action on climate change and how we are working towards a cleaner, brighter future is imperative to the future of generations to come.

So important is climate change that Pope Francis has written a groundbreaking environmental encyclical, Laudato Si. Translated, that means "Praise be to you," which is a line from the Canticle of the Sun, the religious song composed by Saint Francis of Assisi. Overall, it proposes "a moral framework and a new way of thinking about our relationship with nature."

The encyclical is the first encyclical devoted to environmentalism. Second, it is addressed to everyone on Earth, not just the bishops of the church. Third, while there are elements of Catholic teaching, it is not the focus of church doctrine. The papal encyclical calls on every person on the planet to make safeguarding the environment and battling climate change an urgent priority in the 21st century.

I'm proud of our government's leadership. Our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and our Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Glen Murray, are tackling climate change head-on. The low-carbon economy is well under way in Ontario with coal-free electricity, transit electrification, electric and hybrid vehicles, and emission-free renewable energy.

Finally, Ontario has set long- and short-term goals for fighting climate change, and seeks to be a leader in climate change by building a strong carbon-neutral economy, communities, infrastructure and energy. I'm proud that Ontario is working toward that end.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Ms. DiNovo from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 61(a), the following estimates, 2015-16, are reported back to the House, as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be passed by the committee: Office of the Assembly, \$167,940,500—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Agreed. Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Mrs. McGarry from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 563523 Ontario Ltd.;

Bill Pr30, An Act to revive 1064514 Ontario Inc.;

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Precision Pipe Manufacturing Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed. Carried.

Report adopted.

MOTIONS

ESTIMATES

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find—unanimous consent, without notice, on a motion relating to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 63 and the order of the House dated September 4, 2015, should the Standing Committee on Estimates fail to complete its consideration of the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Research and Innovation prior to November 26, 2015, the committee is authorized to meet during its regularly scheduled meeting times during the week of November 30, 2015, for the purpose of considering the estimates of these ministries, and that in such case, the committee shall present one report to the House on December 3, 2015, with respect to all estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62, and that, in the event that the committee fails to report the said estimates on December 3, 2015, the estimates and supplementaries shall be deemed to be passed

by the committee and be deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Agreed. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week in the province of Ontario. This week, which runs from November 1 to 7, is all about raising awareness about a silent killer, to help keep families and loved ones safe.

Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week is the result of this Legislature unanimously passing Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, in 2013. I would not be standing here without the advocacy of Mr. John Gignac. Mr. Gignac was a firefighter for 34 years, but is now on a new mission to end preventable tragedies like the one experienced by his family.

1520

A terrible tragedy motivated him to take action and to relentlessly campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide. John Gignac's niece, Laurie Hawkins; her husband, Richard; and their two children, Cassandra and Jordan, all died from carbon monoxide poisoning in December 2008. To honour their memory, Mr. Gignac created a charitable foundation to promote carbon monoxide education and to raise funds to purchase alarms for at-risk families by fire services nationwide.

We take this opportunity to thank him for the lives that his dedication to carbon monoxide awareness has surely saved. I am also proud that the Ontario Legislature unanimously passed Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, in memory of Laurie and her family, to help save others. In particular, Speaker, I wanted to acknowledge your work in your capacity as the member for Brant in the passage of the bill and in advocacy for safety around carbon monoxide awareness and, of course, I want to acknowledge the commitment of the member from Oxford to this issue and the safety of Ontarians. I want to thank both of you honourable members for your work raising awareness around the absolute necessity for carbon monoxide detectors in people's homes.

The risks of carbon monoxide exposure are all too real. Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer because you cannot see it, you cannot smell it and you can't hear it. It still claims too many lives. In fact, it kills

more than 50 Canadians every year, including an average of 11 people in Ontario. Last year, Ontario firefighters responded to nearly 3,700 calls involving carbon monoxide, most of them in homes or apartments. The fact is that the vast majority of the deaths and injuries from carbon monoxide poisoning are preventable. Installing a carbon monoxide alarm is one of the simplest things we can do to save lives. Carbon monoxide alarms are already mandatory in all new homes built since 2001.

Last year, we took the next step and updated Ontario's fire code to make carbon monoxide alarms mandatory in all residential homes in the province of Ontario. Homes with a fuel-burning appliance, a fireplace or an attached garage must now have a working carbon monoxide alarm installed adjacent to each sleeping area of the home. The regulation introduced requirements for homeowners to make sure that their carbon monoxide alarms are maintained in good working order, including changing the batteries when needed.

These changes reinforce Ontario's role in the country as a public safety leader, as one of the first provinces to make carbon monoxide alarms mandatory in all residential homes and buildings.

Speaker, our work does not end with bringing in a new regulation. We must continue to work every day to ensure that every Ontarian knows about the importance of having a working carbon monoxide alarm in their home. It is our shared responsibility to do everything we can to stop these preventable and needless tragedies. That is why I'm proud to mark the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week in our province's history.

We already know that having a working smoke alarm increases the chances of surviving a fire in your residence by up to 50%. Like smoke alarms, installing a carbon monoxide alarm is one of those small, simple actions that can have a huge impact. These alarms are easy to install, easy to use, are affordable and, most importantly, can save lives. I encourage every Ontarian to install a carbon monoxide alarm today.

If you already have one, make sure it is working and test it whenever you test your smoke alarm. Speak to your family, friends and neighbours and reinforce this very important message. If they need help, ask if you could test their alarms for them. We need to take this week and every single day as an opportunity to spread the word about the dangers of carbon monoxide and the necessity of a detector in our homes. It could truly save the life of someone you love.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm proud to rise in the House today to recognize November as Financial Literacy Month. Together, our government is working to build Ontario up. We are working hard to deliver the best economic future for the province and for all Ontarians.

Financial literacy education plays an important role in this fiscal work. It empowers individuals to build greater security. We live in a time of economic challenges. We

also live in a time of overwhelming choice. With so many financial options available, the need for this education is growing.

We know that personal finances can sometimes seem intimidating and high-stakes. Numerous reports show that money is the number-one source of stress in North America. Ontarians deserve the comfort of knowledge to make good decisions.

Improving financial literacy in the province enables us to positively impact our shared future as we build Ontario up. A better understanding of financial basics is good for economic growth. It means increasing our investments. It means increasing consumer participation responsibly. It means increasing retirement security.

Financially-literate Ontarians understand how best to balance their personal spending choices with appropriate savings for the future. Informed choices lead to better choices. Financially-literate Ontarians are better positioned to make stronger investments. Financially-literate consumers protect themselves by asking the right questions. We want Ontarians to be equipped to avoid exploitation. It's their money; we want them to have more of it and make more of it.

Financial literacy enables students to make the right choices to further their education without compromising their future with excessive obligations. Financial literacy also enables families to make the most of their time together. And it gives our young people a better platform for success. That's why strong financial management skills start in the home.

In Ontario, learning financial basics is supplemented at school. I was pleased in September 2009 to table and pass a motion in this House that undertook that the Ministry of Education include financial literacy in our elementary and secondary school curriculum.

Financial literacy also enables people to understand the need to save for retirement early in their working career. They understand the importance of saving now to finance their post-retirement lifestyle. They know better what they need today and how they get there for tomorrow.

Finally, financial literacy plays an important role in reducing poverty. During the implementation of payday loans legislation in 2008, it was evident that there were high levels of rollovers at excessive costs, affecting those most vulnerable. Enhancing financial awareness can only help, especially those struggling with their personal finances, a fact we have heard in poverty reduction round tables.

Better knowledge of financial basics can go a long way toward helping people improve their circumstances. Reducing the number of people in financial difficulty reduces demands on our social services. With greater understanding of the resources available to them, Ontarians can take a more active role in protecting their futures.

This is not a one-time lesson. Financial literacy education must be ongoing. This month, the Ministry of Finance and partner ministries will celebrate financial literacy by providing more tips. Our hope is to enhance

Ontarians' understanding by sharing more information to improve financial awareness. This is only the beginning. Our priority is to help Ontarians increase their overall financial literacy and enable long-term benefits for all.

Mr. Speaker, I invite our colleagues to partner across our government to further financial literacy initiatives and celebrate Financial Literacy Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and join the Minister of Community Safety to recognize the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week.

In 2008, the Hawkins family in my riding was tragically killed by carbon monoxide poisoning when the vent on their fireplace was blocked. Since then, the Legislature has passed my private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, which made it a requirement to have a carbon monoxide detector in all homes with a fuel-burning appliance or an attached garage, and created Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. That was with your help, Mr. Speaker; that was originally your bill.

It's time to make sure that your family is protected from carbon monoxide. This poisonous gas has no colour, no smell and no taste, so the only way to know if it is in your home is by installing and maintaining—and, when it expires, replacing—a carbon monoxide detector.

1530

I want to remind people that detectors have a limited lifespan and that those which were manufactured before 2008 should now be replaced. You can also help stop carbon monoxide from getting into your home by making sure your vents and chimneys aren't blocked, having a fuel-burning appliance serviced regularly, and not using outdoor appliances such as barbecues inside.

This week, fire departments across Ontario are delivering these messages through events, public service announcements and going door to door. I want to commend them for their efforts and work every day to raise awareness, provide education and save lives.

I also want to commend John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada for their dedication to raising awareness of the need for detectors and their generous efforts to provide them through fire departments to people in need.

All of these efforts are making a difference. We are hearing from fire departments about people who installed detectors because of this law and that some of those detectors have already gone off, alerting home owners to a carbon monoxide leak and likely saving their lives. Those stories make all of these efforts worthwhile. We need to make sure that the families in all homes in Ontario with fuel-burning appliances or an attached garage are protected by having a carbon monoxide detector, and to make sure that this week everyone takes a minute to check that their detectors are working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing, further responses.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Just on that note, too, the Hawkins and Gignac family are from my riding in North Bay, and I want to thank the Insurance Bureau of Canada as well for coming to North Bay in two weeks to distribute additional detectors.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement on Financial Literacy Month as designated by our federal Parliament each November. The Ontario PC caucus has been speaking about the importance of financial literacy for a long time.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, the FCAC, defines financial literacy as "providing people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible decisions that will best suit their situation."

We do have a couple of fundamental disagreements with the government over how it's being integrated in our schools and, in the larger scheme of things, the role of government when it comes to the rights of Ontarians to manage their own personal finances. But we agree that understanding money is the foundation for the entrepreneurship Ontario needs to succeed economically.

We have spoken in the past about financial literacy work already done by groups like the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, the Jr. Economic Club of Canada, the Financial Planning Standards Council and Junior Achievement Canada. We could be looking at ways we can introduce that work in a structured way into our schools, beginning at the earliest levels, so that all of our children will develop the critical life skill of managing their money.

Gail Vaz-Oxlade, the financial guru behind the TV show *Til Debt Do Us Part*, stated in an interview with Global News, "Unless you have a focused, consistent curriculum designed specifically and implemented across the majority of grades ... it's never going to work."

As well, a 2012 study found that only 40% of Ontario high school students felt prepared to manage their finances after graduation, only a quarter said that their schools gave them the financial information they need and 69% said they thought personal finance should be taught in the classroom. So while the ministry claims it has integrated financial literacy into the curriculum, clearly there's a disconnect and the government has work to do.

We hope the government will take steps to put greater and more specific emphasis on financial literacy, so that the next generation can manage money a whole lot better in the future.

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to mark Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and to thank our dedicated fire services

and firefighters from across the province for the work they do promoting carbon monoxide awareness and keeping our communities safe.

Every year, more than 50 Canadians lose their lives to carbon monoxide poisoning. As we've heard today, it is the silent killer: a colourless, tasteless and odourless gas that is largely undetectable to its victims. In Ontario, an average of 11 carbon monoxide deaths occur every year. So this week is an important opportunity to talk about safety and remind all Ontarians how important it is to install and regularly check the carbon monoxide detectors in their homes and workplaces.

In my riding of Oshawa, Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week has an added layer of significance this year, following an incident that occurred at our Robert McLaughlin art gallery this July that can only be described as a near miss. During a summer art camp, 15 children were sent to the hospital following a carbon monoxide leak, after showing symptoms like headaches, dizziness and nausea.

Thanks to the dedicated work of the Oshawa Fire Services and Lakeridge Health, all of the children were fine, but what could have happened certainly left our community shaken.

Robert McLaughlin Gallery is home to a significant and stunning public art collection. Subsequently, it is also home to a highly sophisticated air monitoring system which measures a number of variables, including humidity. However, as we discovered after this incident, carbon monoxide was not measured.

Following this incident, Oshawa city council adopted a resolution calling for amendments to the Ontario building and fire codes to require carbon monoxide detectors in all public assembly spaces. We applaud Oshawa city council for their leadership on this issue, and we support the spirit of the resolution. Since the incident at the McLaughlin gallery, the city has installed 53 carbon monoxide detectors in Oshawa's public assembly spaces so far, and has taken the necessary steps to avoid any future tragedy.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this issue today, and recognize the importance of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and the work our fire services do to keep us safe. I hope that when we return to our ridings for constituency week, we take the time to remind our constituents to test their carbon monoxide detectors as well.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Ms. Catherine Fife: Of course, it's my pleasure to rise today and speak about Financial Literacy Month and the important work being done to ensure that citizens of this province know more about their own finances.

Increasingly, Ontarians are faced with a complex array of financial decisions to make in their everyday lives. It is a sad truth that too many Ontarians lack the skills necessary to make informed decisions related to money and investment. This is why the work being done by the Financial Literacy Month is so significant.

I would actually concur, though, with the Minister of Finance when he said that informed choices lead to better choices, which is why today, when he stood in his place and said, as I quoted the Financial Accountability Officer, that what I was quoting was not true—that is not the best way to absorb and to be respectful of the advice that we're getting from an independent officer of the Legislature.

November is Financial Literacy Month. Organizations from the private, public and non-profit sectors come together each year. Through Financial Literacy Month, organizations across the country use their resources and host workshops, seminars and other events to help Canadians learn how to manage their personal finances successfully.

While these groups who have come together for Financial Literacy Month do incredible work, each one of us can do what we are able to do to help. In my own constituency office, every year I have volunteer accountants come in and help underprivileged residents in our community file their taxes.

The goals of Financial Literacy Month are very noble. As we discussed in this House last May when members were debating the motion by the member from Brampton West about financial literacy, this government, being a majority, has the opportunity to make the necessary changes to our education system that would embed the objectives of the Financial Literacy Month where it needs to be: in our schools. They would do well to start with the findings of the 2010 report of the Working Group on Financial Literacy entitled *A Sound Investment: Financial Literacy Education in Ontario Schools*. Three of the main things that they did suggest, which are worth mentioning: Make financial literacy a compulsory part of the Ontario curriculum; introduce and integrate financial literacy education into the Ontario curriculum as early as possible in a relevant and age-appropriate way; and finally, continue to embed in the curriculum the core content and competencies required for financial literacy.

New Democrats fully support these recommendations. We're willing to work with the government in this regard, and hopefully we can accelerate those recommendations going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means

Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Marco.

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ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de présenter une pétition qui a été signée par M. Claude Aubin de mon comté au sujet de l'Université de l'Ontario français.

« Entendu que ... le 10 février le RÉFO, l'AFO et la FESFO ont présenté le rapport du Sommet provincial des États généraux sur le postsecondaire en Ontario français;

« Entendu que le rapport a indiqué un besoin et un désir pour une université de langue française;

« Entendu que le 26 mai, 2015 la députée France Gélinas a présenté un projet de loi pour créer cette université; »

Ils pétitionnent l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de commencer la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français dès que possible ».

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Michael de l'amener aux greffiers.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One.”

I'll sign that and send it to the table with page Shirley.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Abby to deliver to the table.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page John to bring to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I agree with this, I'll sign my name and give it to page Nicole.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

"Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

"Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

"Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

"Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give this to page Michael.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Shirley.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I agree with this petition, I affix my name to it and give it to page John.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to present 600 signatures from the good people of Waterloo and Kitchener. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Faith.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the select committee, entitled Inclusion and Opportunity: A New Path for Developmental Services in Ontario, was tabled in the Legislature on July 22, 2014;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That government of Ontario immediately review the final report and commence the implementation of the recommendations of the select committee, as contained in the final report."

Since I participated in that select committee, I obviously support this petition and give it to page Marco to take to the table.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms. Catherine Fife: "Petition: Save the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

"Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

"Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

"Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

“Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry’s goal of increasing employment and the provincial government’s poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government’s plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.”

Of course, I support this petition and will affix my signature.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M^{me} Cristina Martins: J’ai une pétition ici qui est présentée à l’Assemblé législative.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l’eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu’elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d’eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu’à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d’alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l’Ontario pour qu’il interdise la création et l’ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l’Environnement d’effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition, et je l'envoie à la table avec John.

DIABETES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

“Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

“Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

“Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Michael.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l’Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2015, I’m now required to put the question.

Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “no.”

I believe the noes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess we have a deferral. We have a deferral slip, so this will be voted on tomorrow after question period. It's deferred until tomorrow.

Second reading vote deferred.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE

LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. Schedule 1 affects the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Schedule 2 affects the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. Finally, schedule 3 affects the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. As the official opposition critic for community safety and correctional services, I will spend the majority of my time today addressing the changes found within schedule 1.

During debate on this bill, you may hear members of the Legislature refer to the term "double-hatter firefighters." This term refers to those who work as full-time firefighters with a city department and, on their days off, offer their services as part-time firefighters in their home communities.

Why is this a problem? The constitution of the International Association of Fire Fighters—the union that represents firefighters in Ontario—prohibits full-time firefighters from volunteering as firefighters in another municipal jurisdiction.

In the case of Tom Hunse, a firefighter with the city of Toronto who volunteers in Innisfil, the union representing him in Toronto petitioned the city to have him terminated. In their view, double-hatters take jobs away from young people who are trying to get into firefighting.

Currently, Ontario is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada where a firefighter's right to volunteer is not protected by legislation. Over the years, several union charges have been brought against these individuals, and in most cases, they stopped serving their home communities for fear of losing their jobs. These firefighters are forced to choose between protecting their livelihoods that their families depend on and working to protect family members, friends and neighbours in their home communities on their days off. This is an incredibly stressful situation for firefighters. It's especially stressful when they are forced to stay at home, instead of helping respond to fires in their home communities.

In late 2014, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario communicated a draft resolution for municipal councils to consider in support of double-hatters. Numerous councils have passed resolutions of support.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills—a good colleague of mine, Mr. Ted Arnott—has fought very hard to make this change, over a decade. I'm glad that he will see this issue get resolved after so many years of effort on his part.

His work received expressions of support from the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, representing volunteer firefighters, by the way; the Association of Fire Chiefs of Ontario; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; and the Fire Marshal of Ontario.

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Schedule 1 of this bill seeks to address this issue, as well as a few others. Bill 109 incorporates significant portions of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protec-

tion and Prevention Act, including unfair labour practices, membership in associations and expedited rights arbitration. Bill 109 would, in fact, allow labour disputes under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to be heard by the Ontario Labour Relations Board as opposed to an Ontario court. This is something I support, given the tremendous backlog of cases that our province's court system is currently struggling with. This seems like a win-win, as we have labour disputes for firefighters handled more effectively and efficiently while also reducing the burden on our justice system.

The bill will also permit associations to require the inclusion of closed-shop language in a collective agreement, with features such as mandatory association dues deductions and provisions requiring membership in the association, or giving preference of employment to members of an association. This can be seen as a positive for the firefighter unions. This measure is balanced by the fact that the bill would allow double-hatters to continue their work without fear of reprisal, which is something that firefighter unions have argued against for the past several years here in Ontario.

With any labour laws in the province, there needs to be proper balance. The balance is between a respect for the needs of workers and the needs of employers. When it comes to changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, there are elements that both firefighters and their unions can in fact agree with. The changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act have been developed in consultation with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and they seem reasonable as a whole.

We look forward, Speaker, to hearing input from individual firefighters and associations during committee to get further feedback on this bill so that we can make it as beneficial as possible for the brave men and women who risk their lives to help keep us safe.

Many firefighters around the province are happy to see this piece of legislation tabled by the Minister of Labour. At the same time, they may be concerned about what is not included in Bill 109, nor any piece of government legislation that has been tabled to date. Countless firefighters and other first responders, and also the province's correctional officers, are anxiously awaiting some action to be taken by the minister when it comes to post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. Our first responders know that seconds matter. For our first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, seconds can feel a lot longer. That's why they're frustrated by this government's stubborn unwillingness to support a good idea when they see it.

The Minister of Labour said, in question period, "I'm convinced that we must do a combination of what's envisioned in Bill 2, with some improvements to it." Well, Speaker, I can't speak for the member from Parkdale–High Park, but I'm confident that she would be willing to have friendly amendments made to her bill if it means that the province will tackle the problem of PTSD sooner rather than later. We already have a bill on the table with full opposition support. It's also received support from the government, at least at second reading.

If you have improvements to the bill, do it at committee. Let police officers, firefighters, EMS personnel and correctional officers explain to Ontarians how post-traumatic stress disorder impacts their lives. Bill 109 is already opening up the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and making amendments to it. Perhaps this can be an opportunity for the government to address this critical issue. Instead, the government has, thus far, indicated that it wants to introduce its own bill, and hold consultations away from the public. Speaker, there's no need to go back to square one on an issue that is clearly non-partisan, where seconds matter, let alone weeks or months. There must be room for compromise and cooperation.

When our first responders show up at a scene, they simply do their jobs. They don't play politics or bicker with each other about who gets credit. They see a problem and they do whatever they can to fix it, together. That's what they expect of their politicians, and that's what they deserve.

Whether it's a third-party bill or a future piece of legislation from the Minister of Labour, we are committed to helping our heroes who are suffering from PTSD. Perhaps this issue could be addressed when Bill 109 heads to the committee stage.

Let me wrap up my comments today by stating that I do support Bill 109 at second reading. While the changes found in schedule 1 seem reasonable, members of the official opposition have expressed some concern, or at least they feel that there are some questions that should be addressed when it comes to the changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. We feel that more public discussion is required for Bill 109 and that public hearings at the committee stage are, in fact, necessary.

I do look forward to the passage of Bill 109 at second reading and the protection of double-hatter firefighters. I also look forward to the strengthening of the bill in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm so pleased to be joined by my new seatmate here.

It's interesting. The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex—I think it needs to be said that sometimes the content and the substantive material get lost in the presentation, because to say that this member is a smooth talker is a whole other area, right?

But I notice that the member did not make reference to one of the key issues of this bill. This is another omnibus bill that contains a lot of really important issues. For us, though, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act is one of the key factors, and the member, for some reason, wasn't that focused on the rights of those respective public service unions as they transition throughout these scenarios.

The major factor is that under section 2 of Bill 109, which includes a provision that provides regulation-making authority regarding bargaining units in the case

of mergers in hospitals or school boards or what have you, it removes the requirement of a vote in the case of a merger if one of the existing bargaining agents meets the minimum threshold of 60%. If a new bargaining unit meets that threshold, a vote is not required.

These are fundamental democratic rights that we hold dear, so I was very surprised that the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex didn't weigh in on that issue. When we give these rights up, we never get them back. Especially when they're embedded in an omnibus bill, they're buried. So one has to wonder, what is the real intention of this bill as it goes forward?

As always, though, I appreciate listening to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, and I look forward to his rebuttal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened very attentively to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who puts a lot of local colour into his remarks. I appreciated his trying to liven this debate up.

I agreed with a number of his comments. I certainly don't agree with everything he said, but that's what this place is about, right? We have the right to have our own opinion, and we don't have to say what other people expect us to say. He said what he thought was right, and I congratulate him for that.

I just wanted to mention one aspect of this bill. I know it talks about the first responders quite a bit, but part of this bill strengthens the whole area of labour protection for people who get hurt on the job. It's not just about first responders or people in unionized workplaces.

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There are all kinds of ordinary Ontarians who work at low-paying, low-wage jobs who don't have the protection of a union. They get hurt and then, in many cases, are not protected by anyone because the employer feels that they can take advantage of that low-paid worker because they may not have command of the English language or they may not be well educated. They're very hard-working people, but they get hurt on the job. And then there are all kinds of situations where sometimes the employer will try to suppress that worker's injury. That is something that is not acceptable. That's one of the important aspects of Bill 109, where there is an attempt to stop the suppression of reporting workplace injuries. If you're hurt on the job, you have every right to go to the WSIB and present your case and get the protection offered to you under Ontario law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to rise and comment on the comments from my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex. Firefighters have the right to volunteer. Nobody knows that more than a rural municipality. In our riding, we border on the city of Cornwall, which has a professional firefighting organization. Many of their firefighters actually help out in the counties.

In our county, Bryan Ward has been a great volunteer for years in many aspects, but certainly in the fire

department—one of our captains and chiefs throughout the years. That expertise is looked upon favourably right across all the counties as they get together for their county-wide meetings, as well as township-wide. I think that that expertise has proven time and time again to be very important. When people want to volunteer, this is their own time; it doesn't impact their job at all, and the way they look at it, they're able to give back to their community. I think that's important. I'm glad to see this bill, finally, after many, many years of some talk around protecting the doubt-hatters—I think it's important that it is here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I'm trying to listen to the member, and his members are all over the place, disturbing the House, and he's trying to make a presentation. The member from Renfrew is down in the third-party area. He's been down there a lot today, I've noticed. He's talking a lot down there. I'm having trouble hearing your guy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wasn't even speaking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You were speaking.

Anyways, continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know that my colleague from Renfrew is in the same boat. They have many volunteer fire departments in their riding, and they depend on this professional help. I think, when you look at return to the community, rural areas are very much in favour of that, and this just goes in line. We have firefighters who live in our community who want to help out with their neighbours and their friends, and it's just a normal process. It's really been part of Canada for its 200 years, and I'm glad that, we got some commitment from a government to follow through. After years and years of promising, finally, they took care of the double-hatters. I guess there's one attaboy due there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to stand and contribute to this debate from the member from Chatham—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Chatham—Kent—Essex. Thank you very much, our new-found member here.

This bill is definitely an omnibus bill. I'm not sure what the government's message is when they've put in schedule 2, in particular. When you look at the bill, there's quite a bit on schedule 1 where what we talk about pertains to the firefighters.

Schedule 2, of course, talks about union mergers. Workers are able to vote a union in when two workplaces merge, kind of like hospitals or municipalities. But it is taking rights away from those workers. It's really saying that the majority of members in one particular union de facto—the whole voting process is not democratic. The member from Kitchener—Waterloo hit it right on the head, that once you take certain rights away, you never get them back, because then it becomes the norm. It

becomes the norm not to have those rights, to use your democratic process, your right to vote.

Absolutely, Speaker, there's a lot to talk about in this bill. I know that with my debate time I'm going to focus on schedule 2.

Schedule 3 is good. There are areas in here that we talk about: that employers are not reporting injuries because they get a bonus, they get some kind of incentive, not to report these injuries. Workers are coming back to work not 100% healed and feeling well. Employers are benefiting from that, and that shouldn't happen. When you're ill, you should be at home, fully recovered, and come back to the job healthy, without being compromised or pressured by an employer because of an incentive for economic or monetary return.

I look forward to hearing further debate on that and contributing later on in my turn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener—Waterloo, Eglinton—Lawrence, Stor-mont—Dundas—South Glengarry and London—Fanshawe for their comments. The member from Kitchener—Waterloo referenced "smooth talker." Speaker, I'm not always a smooth talker, but when I do, you need to listen. So stay listening, my friend; stay listening. I'm a politician as well, and we've been known to be somewhat of a smooth talker. Though I'm not a smooth operator, as Sade might say.

I did mention in my opening comments that I was going to reference schedule 1, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, whereas the member from Kitchener—Waterloo chose to reference schedule 2. I might add thanks to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence. He said, "You know what? We don't always agree in this Legislature. That's okay." I chose to talk about schedule 1. She chose to talk about schedule 2. I understand. We come from different perspectives. That's why we are in different parties. So please understand that as well.

Double-hatters: They deserve to be able to protect the communities in which they live, even though they may be working full-time in another jurisdiction. I'll tell you why. Several years ago I was driving down Highway 2, heading into Chatham. I was in a little town called Louisville. I happened to look to my left and I saw flames in the general store. I immediately pulled over, ran there, pounded on doors and then ran across and got a hold of 911, and guess who responded? It was the volunteer firefighting unit from the Louisville area that responded to that fire. I'm very grateful for that. They got the fire out.

My point is, we need to protect those double-hatters. I'm very pleased that our member from Wellington—Halton Hills—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let us talk about this bill. There are a number of issues with this bill: certain things that are positive and certain things that are troublesome. Let's talk about what those are.

In general, we've seen a trend with majority governments to bring in omnibus bills. When you modify a number of bills or a number of sections within one bill, it creates problems, because there are components of a bill that make sense and there are components that don't make sense, so it creates a difficulty in terms of those who want to support components but oppose very strongly other components.

It also ties into the notion of cynical politics, because you can avoid conflicts by making sure there are certain areas people agree on, and put those forward and everyone agrees. The areas that are contentious can be carved out and those can be debated, because they're contentious. When you wrap in areas that people agree with and areas that people don't agree with purposefully in a bill, it really fuels this notion that parties are more concerned with encouraging divisive politics, politics where people are unable to come to consensus, as opposed to working towards creating more harmonious legislation. That is very common when it comes to this government.

Let's talk about the various schedules. With respect to schedule 1, issues around ensuring there is fairness and various interested parties have rights that are offered to other parties, ensuring that there's consistency: These types of issues are not overly contentious.

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When we move into schedule 2, this is a very clear attempt of the government stripping a fundamental right. There's really no other way to put it. It's pretty blatant. It's pretty overt. That workers should be entitled to vote on their representation is a very fundamental element of workplace democracy. What's really ironic is that we're here in the Legislature, which is supposed to be the pinnacle of democracy—this is the final arbiter of decisions when it comes to how the province is governed. For the government to come up with a bill that takes away the right to vote, in scenarios where 60% of workers can impose on 40% of workers, just doesn't make sense. One of the members brought it up before—the member from Kitchener-Waterloo: What is the purpose of that? Why is the government seeking to remove this ability for workers to choose who they want to represent them? Why is that even a factor? Why is that something that's a priority? Why did the government put this component into this bill? Mr. Speaker, I ask you: Why did the government do this? It really makes no sense. If we talk about fundamental principles of democracy, why would you want to get rid of this ability to vote? Why is the government choosing this as a priority? It simply boggles my mind.

In fact, what we've seen is when the government makes decisions to override these sorts of fundamental principles, often these are challenged in court, and the government incurs considerable legal costs to fight something that they probably will end up losing. There's some jurisprudence that shows that these types of decisions—in this case, where the government is trying to strip a right to vote—very well may be challenged in court and this law might be deemed unconstitutional. Then, we

have the added cost to an already wasteful government for something that, really, has no benefit to the workers, and I struggle to see how it benefits us in a broad sense.

Then, schedule 3 of the bill touches on something that's quite important. I know a number of members in this House, I'm sure, have had constituents come to their offices and complain about what's going on in the WSIB. So appointing an ombudsman to address some of those concerns seems to be a step in the right direction. But what we really need to see is an overhaul of the WSIB. We need to see a significant improvement in the way it's structured and in the way it's working, because there are some serious problems. There's no way you can tell me that you're not getting the same complaints that we're getting in our offices about the WSIB.

Mr. Randy Hillier: They don't answer the phone.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of our colleagues from the Conservative caucus brings up a great point: Maybe you're just not answering your phones. Mr. Speaker, maybe they're just not answering the hundreds and hundreds—maybe thousands—of complaints that are being fielded on this issue. Maybe they're not answering the calls because it's something that we know is there. The government has an opportunity. They have a majority. They could bring forward some amendments to actually improve the system to address the concerns, but the government is not doing that. Why they're not doing it, who knows? I don't know, but I can certainly raise a concern.

Though that is a good step, really the problem with schedule 3 of Bill 109 is that—you have a golden opportunity here. Our member from Oshawa has put forward Bill 98, which actually goes much further and is a much more comprehensive and really a much more fair bill. It addresses issues around loss of earnings and survivor benefits and does so in a manner that's more wholesome and accounts for the realities of workers. It looks at latent illnesses, instead of ignoring this as a reality, instead of putting arbitrary time limitations and denying benefits simply for the purpose of just denying benefits and, really, no other purpose—finding an excuse to deny a benefit which should be provided and applying time limitations where the only purpose of this limitation is just to find another way to deny a claim. I implore you, with respect to Bill 109, to take our member's Bill 98 and implement it. Our member from Oshawa has developed a very comprehensive bill, and we encourage you to implement it. We hope you do.

When we're talking about employment and labour law and the fact that the government is addressing this in this bill and is trying to tackle some of the issues, I implore the government to address a very large concern when it comes to employment law in this province. It's the issue of precarious employment. Precarious employment is one of the major concerns of people across this province. More and more, we're seeing people who are being hired in precarious positions and people who are hired in part-time employment with no sense of when they're going to be called in for work and no sense of security.

The Law Commission of Ontario did a very comprehensive report, as did many other organizations, and went into discussion around the impact of precarious employment. Precarious employment has significant impacts on family lives and on individual stress levels, and it impacts people's wages. In fact, a report commissioned by McMaster University and the United Way talks about the fact that with precarious employment, when you don't have secure employment you're less likely to be engaged in civic responsibilities. You're less likely to be engaged in your school and less likely to be engaged in your community, because you don't feel as worthy. These are some serious issues.

It is important to note that over the past 10 years—the past decade—there has been a phenomenal increase in temporary and precarious employment, particularly in temporary agencies. I quote a newspaper article written by Sara Mojtehedzadeh, published on May 10, 2015. She writes, "The province's employment services sector earned \$5.7 billion in revenue in 2012, a near 72% jump from 2002. Temporary agencies account for an estimated 60% of that industry's total revenue."

I point to a 72% increase in temporary agencies in the past decade. Guess who was in power over the past decade. Guess whose responsibility it is that we have seen such an increase in temporary job agencies. It's this government, the Liberal government of Ontario. It is under this government's rule that temporary job agencies have increased and we find racialized people, women, new immigrants and new Canadians disproportionately impacted by this. The responsibility and the fault lie squarely at the feet of this government.

I call on the government to address the issue of precarious employment. Let's tackle this issue to ensure that people can get full-time, good-paying, permanent jobs instead of precarious employment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm grateful to have an opportunity to respond to the always eloquent comments by the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton, and to make the point very strongly—there won't be enough time in my couple of minutes to speak about all the aspects of the bill that I think are so important—that it really is about amending three separate acts to increase fairness and efficiency.

I think that what I want to reference most specifically are the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I have worked very closely with the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, who have been working very, very hard to continue to see fairness for those who are in need of those benefits.

One of the best and most important things about Bill 109 is that it would provide a greater safeguard to all workers in the province. Specifically, in terms of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, it would ensure that workers—workers need to know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim. One would tend to think that shouldn't be an issue, but it is. Under this legislation, that right will be protected.

If passed, this bill will prohibit employers from taking any actions against a worker with the intent, on their part, of discouraging a worker from filing a claim or influencing a worker to withdraw or abandon a claim with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board for benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses. That is really an important aspect of this legislation. These are things that need to be put in place.

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Again, I stand here in strong support of that measure plus the other measures that are in this legislation and certainly hope that we will have the full support of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I listened intently to the deputy leader of the third party's comments on Bill 109. I'm certainly in agreement on schedule 2. This provision in schedule 2 cannot be justified. We know that people using the vote—and the rule of law and democracy is that we need to put protections in to protect the minority from the majority. Here in schedule 2, the Liberal government is going completely counter to that premise. They're saying that if you have a majority union in a workplace, the minority no longer has any rights to choose or select who might be their bargaining unit. We know that this will only lead to greater mergers and acquisitions and bigger unions being the sole bargaining unit for many industries, which is not justifiable.

I do want to comment on the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He said that schedule 3 will now protect workers, because they would have a right to file a WSIB claim. Of course, they already have that right. They've had that right for a long time. If the minister read the bill, he would see that under section 155.1, that protection has been modified. Presently, there's a \$100,000 fine for anybody who prevents an employee from doing that. It now is raised to \$500,000. So the protection is already there.

In addition, under section 22(3), we're also going to add in an administrative monetary penalty, which is not defined under this legislation. The problem with AMPS, of course, is that there is no defence. We do not know what the penalty will be, but there will be no defence and a five-fold increase in the present offence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and follow the comments of my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton on this bill.

This one, again, is basically three bills put together into one, and they don't serve the same purpose. Two of them are fairly progressive. Basically, what the government is doing is taking, for instance, the part of this bill that is aimed at firefighters—a good thing—but then, with the second part of the bill, it's strictly aimed at eliminating the democratic rights of workers. Basically, they're pitting the workers of other sectors against the firefighters.

They have great speaking points on firefighters; we agree. On the WSIB stuff, there could be better changes made, but again, it's a step in the right direction, a small step. But in the middle, they've basically put a poison pill. The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton did a good job of explaining that, and he was supported by the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. And we don't always agree with that member, but he made a very good point.

You always wonder, and I still would wonder after four years in this place, why the government doesn't put forward a bill in its entirety—which could be molded or made better but that dealt with one issue—get it passed and then put forward another bill, which we would agree or not agree with, and pass it or have it fail. At least then it would actually be constructing a better province and a better society, as opposed to always pitting one against the other. Why, in a majority, does this government do that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. I do agree with his comments about precarious employment. As a matter of fact, I think most of the people in this Legislature—I daresay all these people—have those same concerns.

In that vein, when we are talking about the provisions in the bill that affect the WSIB, I want to assure you that, just as you answer the phones, we answer the phones as well. I really took some—I don't want to say I took offence to that, but I think it was a bit out of character for the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton to suggest that.

The provisions around the WSIB are there to protect workers from employers who are trying to suppress claims. It's to give them some added protection. In response to the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, by providing stiffer penalties, you do give a stronger enforcement tool. That makes that tool more effective, and I'd like to suggest to him to remember that.

Back to the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington: Section 2 applies to the public sector bargaining act. It's the public sector; it's not across all industry. That's my understanding. That's the way the bill reads.

Back to the final point that the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton made about there being a poison pill: I wouldn't suggest that the government has to create legislation where we all agree all the time. Otherwise, we really wouldn't need to be here. There's a matter for debate that's in the middle of this bill. We do disagree on it; there is a difference. It's there. That's why we're here for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton has two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to thank everyone for adding their voice to this debate. I appreciate it.

I want to end with again addressing that this government has an opportunity, in tackling the employment and

labour statute law, by addressing this, to look at the very serious issue of precarious employment.

I want to just summarize this issue one more time in closing. Precarious employment is a serious problem in this province. There have been far too many people who are being hired in temporary and part-time employment. This type of employment is damaging our society. It's significantly impacting our communities. We know that this issue of precarious employment is impacting racialized individuals and new Canadians; it's particularly impacting women as well. It's a serious issue that needs to be addressed. We also know that since 2002 to 2012 there have been clear studies that have shown that this industry's profits have increased by 72% during this time; they have skyrocketed in profits. The industry has increased significantly under this government's rule.

The government may claim that they care about this issue, but they created the problem. They created the problem by allowing temporary agencies to flourish and by making it far easier to hire someone temporarily than to hire them permanently. It's far easier in this province to hire someone on a temporary, part-time basis than it is to hire them in a permanent position. That's simply unacceptable.

This province needs to do more to ensure that employers can hire people in a permanent manner and to make that easier to do, as opposed to hiring them through an agency, which has now become the easier way to hire.

I ask this government to take some serious action on this file. The track record of this government is abysmal. We ask you to improve the situation and ensure that people can get full-time, permanent, good-paying jobs in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased that you recognized me.

I'm pleased with the opportunity to speak to Bill 109, which covers a number of different things. As the third party has indicated, they see this as an omnibus bill, and it does deal with several different statutes and amends said statutes. I want to speak about a couple of them myself here.

I do want to speak about schedule 1, which is one that is of great interest to me. I come from a rural part of the province, as most of you people know, the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I would say, somewhat subjectively, I represent the best people in this province, and I'm proud to do so. They're very hard-working people who look forward to a hard day's work and being rewarded for it fairly.

1640

One of the challenges we have in rural Ontario, of course, is fire protection. As any of you people know who live or have vacation homes or wherever in this vast province, the ability to provide fire protection becomes somewhat more difficult as the distance between a fire station and the dwellings becomes longer and longer.

One of the things that has been a contentious issue and that I think this bill helps to address is the issue of double-hatters, or two-hatters, as they are referred to. That is a firefighter who is employed as a professional in the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association but also has connections or maybe a home in an area that is not serviced by a professional department.

In my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I really don't have much in the line—I have Pembroke, Petawawa, Renfrew—very few which are professional departments, and we have a number of volunteer departments. What is difficult is a situation that has cropped up in my riding more than once, and that is someone who works for a professional department elsewhere—I remember a gentleman; I won't use the name because I haven't talked to him about it. I'm not even sure if he lives in my riding anymore. He was a professional firefighter here in Toronto, and he had property, which he spent a lot of time at, in the Killaloe area. He volunteered on the Killaloe–Hagarty–Richards fire department, and he was always under a great deal of pressure back here to stop doing that. They didn't want him doing that. In fact, he was always under threats of possible sanctions by his union for providing his expertise and services to the fire department back in my riding. It was a win-win, as far as we were concerned, because he was a professional firefighter in Toronto—he got all the training there, as well. He could impart some of that knowledge and that training as a professional firefighter to our firefighters back home. It makes perfect sense. When he would be home sometimes, there was no issue of danger or him being overworked. He was at home, sometimes, for two or three weeks, on holidays. He could be of great service to the people in my riding. But he was always under increasing pressure to not continue as a volunteer firefighter. I'm not sure that at some point—because this goes back even before I was an MPP—he didn't give up on being a volunteer in the fire department because of the pressures that were brought to bear on him.

I remember, before I was elected, I had a discussion with Ted Arnott. It wasn't Wellington–Halton Hills then; I forget what riding it might have been, at the time, that he was representing. He was pushing this double-hatter issue very, very strongly, as a private member's bill. He was one of the guys I contacted. I talked to him, before I was ever elected, about his pursuit in double-hatters and got to understand his dedication to the issue and how it could be helpful to others of us in other places in the province. So it was an issue that I was aware of before I ever got elected. Here it is, some 12 years later, that the government has actually moved in this bill in a way that I think will be helpful in resolving that issue.

The other issue is, of course, in schedule 2. I share some of the concerns of my friends in the third party. I understand the logistical desire to make these transitions easier.

I apologize, Speaker, if I turned my back on you. That was totally unintentional.

I understand the logistical challenges, sometimes, if there are two unions within a workplace and there's talk

of amalgamation and they want to make it maybe a little simpler. What the government has done is, if 60% of the unionized people at that workplace are in your union, you simply absorb the members of the other union and one union represents it. But what would be wrong with just letting people vote? What would be wrong with just allowing the democratic process to take place? I'm a big believer in democracy. I see in this House how democracy gets subverted, many times when the opposition is not even allowed to debate an issue beyond the desire of the government, because they feel that it's gone on long enough.

But I also want to point out to those people who are concerned about democracy that we have an issue in this province: card-based certification, which is a big concern to me. In my riding, we had unions go into an electrical shop on New Year's Eve when three of 30 people were working, got two of them to sign a union card, and the next day that shop was unionized. By the way, that was a year and a half ago, or almost two years ago; that company is out of business. The IBEW went in, unionized it—that company is out of business. Not because the workers didn't have the democratic right to vote as to whether or not they wanted to join the IBEW—no. They simply went in, got two people out of three who were working that day to sign it, and anybody became a member of the union.

I don't have a lot of time, but I do want to talk—there's also the issue of the changes to the WSIB. My goodness, I won't have time to talk about all the issues, but if there's ever a place where changes could be made, it certainly is the WSIB. But I'll just relate a little story of how life has changed when it comes to workers' compensation. I had the opportunity to talk to my friend from London–Fanshawe about this earlier today. We were talking about how life has changed in this Legislature and the work of an MPP.

I was talking to a gentleman last year while I was having my truck serviced. He starts talking to me—my dad was elected here in 1963—and says, "Your dad really helped me." I said, "I'm really pleased when I hear about those stories." He said, "Yes. I got hurt on the job in construction. It was five months. I hadn't received a penny. I was in the Bo-Peep Restaurant in Eganville having a coffee, and your dad was in there having a coffee with Harry Searson. They were talking, and your dad comes over to me, because Harry probably told him that I was having trouble with WSIB"—at that time, it was workers' compensation. "Your dad comes over and he says, 'How's it going with the compensation?' And I told him, 'Not worth a darn. At five months, I haven't had a penny. We're living on dust.'"

That was a Friday morning. He said the next Wednesday, he had all his back cheques; five months were all paid. Never had another problem with the workers' compensation. Now that was the way—I'll give my dad a lot of the credit, because he was a bulldog. But at the same time, it's how the world has changed as well. How people were able to get things done in those days because

we weren't encumbered by such a gigantic system that bogs progress down sometimes.

But that's just one story. I could tell you a million stories about things that my dad did for people. And you know who the big beneficiary of it has been today? It has been me, because I then received the support of my constituents many, many times because of things that my dad did for them in the past, or their parents or grandparents, because it goes back a long way. He was elected 52 years ago.

But, anyway, does the WSIB need some work? Oh, yes, it does. Will this bill address all of the needs? No, it won't. There are a lot of things to be done. I don't have that much time left, but we'll look forward to having a chance to discuss this at a later date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: After listening to the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, it's quite possible that we have more in common than we originally thought.

I will just finish off, though, his last point around WSIB. The big concern—and perhaps he'll touch back on it in his two minutes—is that there are some good things that this bill is trying to address about WSIB. All of us in our respective ridings hear about WSIB every single day.

There are procedural provisions against claim suppression, which is good, but the problem is that—so it prohibits employers from suppressing claims directly or indirectly, and then employers, if they're found guilty of claim suppression, can be fined up to \$500,000. But the big missing piece, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no language in the bill around procedural mechanisms for enforcement or prevention of employers from receiving annual rebates.

1650

You know, the language can be beautiful; it can be. The intention can even be there, but if there's no oversight, if there's no mechanism to ensure that the legislation is actually being upheld, then it means nothing. There is a pattern of legislation coming forward from this government and it having huge weaknesses in it. This has been a serious criticism that we have had. If you're going to craft a piece of legislation, build it right and consult.

The other piece where there was no consultation was on schedule 2; the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke also references that. This is removing the requirement of a vote, in the case of a merger, if one of the existing bargaining agents meets the minimum threshold. So if a new bargaining unit meets that threshold, a vote is not required. There has been no call for this change from our labour partners and there was no consultation on this particular issue. It ignores and overrides the basic principles of workplace democracy.

Mr. Speaker, we heard a lot about the activist centre from this Premier and this government. These are not progressive changes, and we would hope that there would be room to amend them going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I always look forward to having the opportunity to lend my voice to the discussion and debate that's taking place here this afternoon. Obviously, this is a couple of minutes that I have to respond and ask questions, perhaps, of the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

I have to say, even though do I have limited time, that I want to begin by actually acknowledging the eloquent storytelling of that particular member, specifically talking about the good memories and the good legacy left to him in his community by his father. That was a good story, and I know that the member says that he has a million more. I'm guessing we will not have time to hear the balance this afternoon in his two-minute conclusion.

I just have to say that there is always a significant—healthy, I would argue—cut and thrust here in the debates that we have, but it is heartwarming and it is encouraging to hear a story such as that, in reference to how things have changed—dramatically, some would argue—over the years in terms of individual MPPs' abilities to cut through the complexities of government. I don't think there's a member on any side of this House that would disagree that, as we have gone forward over the years, perhaps it has become a bit more difficult to navigate government across the board, at all levels, regardless of who happens to be in power.

On the bill itself, on Bill 109—I'm actually holding in my hand a significant document with respect to the contents of the bill. I listened not only to the member from Renfrew but also the member from the NDP caucus from Kitchener, who spoke about the thrust of the bill, I suppose, but then also some of the specific concerns that they have. I think that people on this side of the House would understand and respect the questions that are being raised and the details that are being sought. That is, of course, part of the legislative process.

We believe, on this side of the House, that it is important to move forward with this legislation, that it does move the yardstick significantly forward in terms of the issues that it will address. I think that we all look forward to having this bill navigate itself through the entire process. I look forward to continued debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand to recognize the valid comments that my colleague from eastern Ontario shared. I really appreciated the anecdotal stories that he shared with us when his father had the honour of representing the very same riding. He referred to his dad as a bulldog. Well, Speaker, I have to say that his pup didn't fall too far away from the doghouse—

Interjection: He's a chihuahua. He's more of a chihuahua.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:—because he is as much of a bulldog as I know.

Setting all jesting aside, you have to know that I'm sure that the constituents of your riding truly appreciate

the fine work that you do following in your father's footsteps, and I'm very sincere in saying that.

He raised a very good point in terms of the efforts that need to be done in terms of moving that yardstick ahead in terms of WSIB. We all have stories from our own respective ridings with regard to how it's not working. Speaker, I can think of a handful right now, in a second, where WSIB has made people feel absolutely irrelevant. They feel distrusted when they come forward and say, "We have a problem. It's happened in the workplace, and we need your support in terms of fair representation in addressing the issue at hand." They're literally put through the wringer, Speaker, and it's not right. So if we can move the yardsticks ahead, as we heard from across the floor, I support that wholeheartedly.

The other thing I would be remiss in noting if I didn't say it here is that it's time that double-hatters are allowed to follow their hearts and not only work on a professional firefighting force but also volunteer in smaller communities as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to rise in this House and follow the remarks of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I must say that he is one of the most enjoyable people to listen to in this House. Although I don't always agree, I'm always in awe of how he can weave his personal stories. I think that one of the reasons he keeps getting elected is that he's a very personable fellow. Once again, I don't always agree, but on this bill he brought forward a couple of issues regarding the democratic rights of people, about which we have concerns and about which he also expressed that he shares concerns, and it's nice to be able to agree with him on that.

When he talked about the WSIB, and when other people who commented on his remarks also talked about the WSIB, it sure strikes a chord with all of us. When I got elected, I didn't realize there were that many problems with the WSIB until I had to start dealing with everyone else's problems. It's not a simple system. It's not that if you get hurt in the workplace, you go and make a claim and—you know what?—you're protected. It doesn't work like that anymore, Speaker. Maybe it used to, but it doesn't. It's basically a for-profit or minimize-loss agency, and their first response is to deny and deny and, once again, deny. That's a huge problem, because people's lives, in some cases, are shattered, not only from the injury but from having to fight the WSIB.

In every insurance agency, there are some people who try to stretch the system, but they're not the majority. For a lot of people who aren't trying to stretch the system and who have legitimate claims, their lives are ruined. It would be much better if we actually spent several days or weeks discussing that and fixing that instead of piece-meal here and there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Come on, give me four. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Transportation, the member for Huron–Bruce and the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

I did want to thank the minister for his comments and his acknowledgement. I agree with him that regardless of what party holds the levers of power in this chamber, life has gotten more difficult when it comes to the issue of getting things done and getting things done on a timely basis. I recognize that and share his views on that, too. It would be nice if we could all work at getting things done on a more timely basis.

I did want to comment on the kind words of my colleague from Huron–Bruce. While I do try to get things done for my constituents, it is a different time and all I will say is that, in fairness, sometimes it's difficult when you get compared to your father. Because I will also have people say to me, "Well, why can't you fix that? If your dad was around, that would have been taken care of yesterday. I knew your dad, and I'll tell you, when you called Paul Yakabuski, you got on the phone with Paul Yakabuski and within a day things were fixed." I stand there sometimes saying, "I know, I know. But we live in a different world today, and it is more difficult."

The WSIB is one of the most difficult issues. I think it's universal in this House that every one of us has dealt with situations in our ridings where we are exasperated. We wish that we could do more to help that individual who has come through our door. And they are countless; they are many. We're up against a system that just moves at a snail's pace. As my colleague says, the word there is to do everything you can to minimize or deny the claim at first blush. We really do need to come up with a better system to assist injured workers in this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always my pleasure to stand in the Legislature and speak on behalf of my constituents of London–Fanshawe.

I rise today to speak about Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. This bill was introduced in the Legislature just before the end of the sitting, with a last-minute notice given the same day it was introduced. Simply put, this is an omnibus bill that contains a number of changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Speaker, I have some concerns with this bill, specifically in regard to the proposed changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. This section of Bill 109 includes a provision that provides regulation-making authority regarding bargaining units in the case of mergers in hospitals, school boards and municipalities. While doing this, it removes the requirement of a vote in case of a merger if one of the existing bargaining agents

meets the threshold of 60% of total membership. This means that if a new bargaining unit meets the threshold, there is no vote required for workers. I don't understand how a government can even legislate taking your democratic power away to vote who you want representation from. That, Speaker, is unfathomable, that we can legislate things like that.

Again, I can't begin to explain how dangerous this is to labour unions across the province and to the workers they represent. We should not and cannot take away the democratic rights of workers in the case of an amalgamation or merger. We as New Democrats oppose this change, as do major public service unions representing thousands of workers.

I would like to share some words from the president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union who was concerned about this proposed change: "If Bill 109, as currently drafted, passes into law then a worker will lose the right to determine which union he or she chooses to represent them. That is fundamentally unjust and it ignores the principle of workplace democracy...."

"In a merger vote, workers should be entitled to judge each union on their own merits. Bill 109 rewards one union for having signed up the most members compared to the other union. It doesn't allow for members to decide for themselves which is the stronger union with respect to negotiating, or enforcing, a good collective agreement. The proposed legislation snatches away that entitlement." Those are the words of the OPSEU president.

This proposed legislation would absolutely and clearly snatch away the rights of workers. I really don't even know how to put into words how ridiculously wrong schedule 2 is in the bill.

OPSEU is not the only group opposed to this change. The Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Federation of Labour have all called this into question. So you have experts in this area raising the flag to this government, to the members in this Legislature today. They're explaining to them, they're giving them their professional opinion: This is bad for the workplace. This is bad for workers. Yet it falls on deaf ears.

Furthermore, there has been no consultation with any union on this proposed amendment. Is this really how this government wants to treat the hard-working men and women in this province—by having no consultation at all on this piece of legislation?

Time and time again this government has shown its true colours by ignoring the facts and pandering to political insiders. You have to ask yourself, how can you sell Hydro when you don't have a public consultation? How can you sell Hydro when 85% of the people have said, "No, do not sell our public asset"?

Every day, Speaker, every day—this is not an exaggeration—I get emails on Hydro. They say, "Please, stop this Liberal government from selling off our public asset." I would love to continually forward them to you, if you don't believe that that's the case. Maybe you'll read them. Maybe you'll understand there is a public

push. The problem is, Speaker, they have to listen, and they're not listening.

Schedule 2 is a perfectly illustration of the fault of this government not to pay attention to real consultation and real expert advice. We have seen it under the previous Premier and we are seeing it again, as I mentioned. Even though, as I'm taking about London Hydro, 185 municipalities across the province, numerous chambers of commerce and all of the independent officers of this Legislature have called on this government to reverse their decision to sell Hydro One, they have ignored the facts, the experts and Ontarians.

What will it take for this government to listen and stop, or even consult? What will it take for this government to bend and actually pay attention to the people they represent? Does it take seats in an election? Is that what will move you? Is that what will profoundly make you understand the repercussions of your actions? I don't know, Speaker. I have to really just shake my head on that one.

It was not long ago that this government had, of course, their gas plant scandals, and, you know, we all want to forget about that on that side of the House. And once again, they turned their backs on Ontarians. It's the same old story from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Sorry, the member has a point of order. However, for your point of order, you must be in your seat, so we will continue and I will listen attentively to what she has to say regarding—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the bill. Thank you very much.

Back to the member for London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is kind of the mantra that we're going to talk about when this government first proposes legislation. They propose a piece of legislation or an idea, and the idea in this particular case in schedule 2 is clearly flawed. I can't imagine you can argue that on that side of the House.

Next, even after the facts and the experts prove that the legislation shows not to be in the best interests of Ontarians and people or workers, they do it anyways. They bring it forward like nothing happened, like they don't realize what their actions mean. So they pass it through. Then afterwards, when people aren't happy, they explain it away like it's not their fault. They did this with the gas plants, they did it with what's currently happening with Hydro One, and again with this piece of legislation.

Last week, my colleague from Welland spoke on this bill, and I agree with what she had said wholeheartedly. She said that what's worse than any of this and most offensive to the hundreds of thousands of workers across Ontario is that we know for certain that the Liberal government held absolutely no consultations with relevant stakeholders with regard to this schedule. Everybody knows this. Yet they sit there on that side of the

House and they have blank looks on their faces like that's okay. That's not okay. It's not okay in a democracy not to listen to the people you represent. It's not okay in a democracy not to listen to the other members of this House when they're ringing alarm bells. That's not okay.

What you're doing is you're taking the rights away from someone to vote. That doesn't make any sense. We talk about electoral reform, and then here we are taking rights away from workers. Then they tout how progressive this government is. This government does not understand how important the fundamental freedom of choice actually is in a democracy like ours. In my experience, quantity isn't the predominant factor to success.

So I have to ask this government—I know some of the members aren't standing up in this debate for their 10 minutes and contributing to it. I wish I could have an opportunity to really listen to their justification in putting schedule 2 in this omnibus bill, because I would like to have some hope. I would like to have some hope for democracy. I would like to have some optimism for democracy and some fairness. In your two minutes that you may have that you can summarize some of this debate, please provide some justification on the rationale for schedule 2 to take the right of workers to vote for what they want to have representation for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 109, because this bill is actually about strengthening protections for our workers. That's something that we take very seriously on this side of the House. We want to ensure that we have fairness within our labour laws, and that's actually exactly what this bill is addressing.

1710

I want to speak specifically to the addition of section 48.1 in the WSIA. In the current section 48 of the WSIA, it really outlines the statutory minimums for calculating benefits for spouses and children of deceased workers. This minimum is currently about \$15,000.

Let us consider this scenario: A plumber retires in 2005, is diagnosed with cancer in 2008 and passes away in 2010. It was determined that the cancer was the result of the plumber's work environment. For the purposes of calculating survivor benefits, the WSIB would consider the plumber's earnings on the date of illness, which is the date of diagnosis. As a retired employee, the survivor benefits would simply be the statutory minimum.

With the addition of section 48.1, the WSIB's operational practice of calculating survivor benefits based on the average annual earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade in which the worker's disease was contracted, or the 12 months prior to the date of diagnosis, whichever is greater, would become the law.

Therefore, in this scenario, the WSIB would consider what a plumber in the same industry was earning in 2008 to determine the diseased plumber's earnings. This way, the spouse and the children of the deceased worker are protected from being denied survivor benefits because the disease was contracted after retirement.

Speaker, Bill 109 is about ensuring that we protect our workers' rights, and that's what we're doing with proceeding with this bill, if passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know that we're looking forward to this bill being passed. I know that schedule 2 is particularly, I guess, an annoyance to the third party, but really, I look at it and it's not very often that we do anything in this House that actually cuts regulation. It is a step in the right direction where it seems to make sense. The group already is a majority. Certainly there are ways to contravene that, if the overall group wants to change that.

We see a government here that—time after time in my riding, we look at the complaints people have through simple things like building a home. It's getting so expensive under this government. There are so many regulations. People are turning around and blaming our local building inspector—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Now they want to put a land transfer tax in there, as well.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, a land transfer tax.

They have taken away the average Joe's ability to have a reasonable home and to survive work in this province. I think we've got to get back to the point where we start making life a little bit simpler and a little bit cheaper. Because as we say, the taxpayers in this province, if they can, are leaving. They're turning out the lights. A lot of them are turning out the lights because they can't afford them, but they're turning out the lights as they leave. I think it's time to change and to try to reverse that, to try to get things under control—power, regulation. I tell people at home, when they blame the local building inspector, "Those are just the massive changes that happened last year. You're blaming the wrong people. It's the Liberal government in Toronto that's causing this trouble, causing this expensive life where no longer can you just go out and get anything done."

Some regulation is important to a point, but when it takes away our right to a reasonable life, then I think it's gone overboard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to have a couple of minutes to put on the record regarding Bill 109, and to comment on the member from London—Fanshawe. She focused on the second part of this bill.

I'd also like to comment on the Associate Minister of Finance, who said that this bill is about strengthening protections for workers. We would agree that two parts of it are. But I would like to know from the government's side exactly how removing the democratic right to decide who you're represented by as a worker, how on earth that strengthens your right as a worker. I fail to understand that.

This is a classic example of how often we hear that Liberals campaign on the left and govern on the right.

Here they say they're protecting workers, and we have the Conservatives agreeing with the NDP—and they're on the right—saying that the Liberals are removing democratic rights from workers. Yet, they stand there and say, "But this bill is all about strengthening protection for workers." Schedule 2 is removing their democratic rights. It's got nothing to do with protecting any worker. For this bill to actually protect workers, schedule 2 should be struck right out of it. Then it would, to some degree, protect workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to have a couple of minutes on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I want to congratulate our Minister Flynn for bringing this forward. I think he's doing a great job there, quite frankly, Speaker. I think he is well placed in the labour ministry. He's got a great passion for issues related to workers and worker safety. I want to thank him for the work that he's doing.

A little bit earlier, my colleague from Thunder Bay, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, referenced a group in Thunder Bay that has been very active on a lot of these files, the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, a very proactive—I would say probably as proactive of a group as there is in the province, and a group that I spent a fair bit of time meeting with and working with. I want to thank them for their advocacy.

I would think that in here there is a point or two that I think they would be thankful for and appreciative of. I just want to read that quickly in the little time available to me. As mentioned, the legislation deals with three different acts. This part is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that I'm referencing, that I think they'd be interested in. If passed, this bill would also provide greater fairness for survivors in case of work-related death. Bill 109 would enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker engaged in the same profession as that out of which the deceased worker's injury arose.

It's important, Speaker, because—and I'll just conclude with this point. It's important for how the WSIB calculates survivor benefits for a worker who, unfortunately, dies of an occupational disease and who had no or low earnings at the date of the diagnosis because they were retired. Obviously, in many of these examples, there is also a latency period that needs to be accommodated for.

I think the group in Thunder Bay and others across the province would be happy with that part of the work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London—Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, for the wrap-up here, but it's a little disappointing that my whole debate piece for 10 minutes was on schedule 2 and it fell on deaf ears. Selective hearing is a talent that's acquired by the Liberals.

Avoidance of schedule 2 is not going to make those things go away. I hope that when there is a committee

hearing—now back up a minute. Today, I looked up how much time we spent debating this bill. It's about five hours and 22 minutes as of this morning. Now this afternoon, we're going to be almost on the verge of six and a half hours, which means this government can call time allocation. Shame on you that you would even—the pattern of behaviour leads me to believe that tomorrow or sometime when we get back from break on Remembrance Day, you're going to call this bill for time allocation.

Our only saving grace is that I hope, when we get this to committee, you will allow presentations and you will allow a substantial amount of time for people to come forward and travel to Toronto. If you look at your history, if you look at your pattern of behaviour, you won't travel the bill because you don't want to hear from workers who are losing their rights. Honestly, when you look at the set-up of this House, there is a majority government, but you haven't taken away our right to vote. We can still voice our opinion that we're dissatisfied with something even though, technically, you can just pass it through because you have a majority. But you haven't taken away our right to speak; you haven't taken away our right to vote.

You're taking the rights away from workers, and that's wrong. That's wrong, and you should listen. You should listen to me because I generally don't get this fired up about something. The members know—and this is probably as fired up as I'll get, so you need to pay attention—that schedule 2 is not democratic. Schedule 2 is wrong for workers. I hope in committee you're going to listen to people who are going to be affected by this bill because of your legislation.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. It's a beautiful day here in Toronto. Enjoy it while it lasts; that's all I can say. It's like summer out there.

It's actually a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon and speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, because, as the member from London—Fanshawe just indicated, a lot of us in the Legislature aren't going to get the opportunity to speak to this bill. As the chihuahua from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke would point out, the guillotine—

Interjection: Is about to fall.

Mr. Todd Smith: —is about to fall on this bill, and they're going to cut off the rights of elected members of the Legislature to speak to this piece of legislation. So I'm honoured that I get the opportunity before that guillotine falls.

I would also, as the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry just said—he commended the Minister of Labour for coming up with this piece of legislation. Although it has its flaws, I like the fact that he actually named it something that it is instead of something a little bit condescending or misleading, like some other titles of

bills from the government have been. This is simply called the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. On that score, full credit to the Minister of Labour. You know what? He's a good Irish guy. He seems like he just wants to get down to the basic facts of this issue.

Bill 109 seeks to amend a few labour statutes to reflect certain issues that the government has run into in recent years because of decisions made without thinking about the potential consequences. The first one is the amendments to the Labour Relations Act and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act in order to protect double-hatters. I know there has been a lot of talk about that this afternoon. There has been a lot of good work done by members on this side of the House, in particular my seatmate from Kitchener—Conestoga, Mr. Harris, and also the member from Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, on this file. The fact that it's in this bill I think speaks to the dogged determination, if we can continue down that road this afternoon, of those members in the House, and it's reflected in this legislation.

In my riding, we have professional firefighters in Belleville, in Picton, in Quinte West and in Bancroft. Many of the smaller municipalities live only by the volunteer aspect of firefighting. By protecting double-hatters, we're allowing firefighters who live in communities that they don't work in to play a role in protecting their homes and the homes of their neighbours.

I know that in some of my communities and in communities right across the province, volunteer and professional firefighters work together in a hybrid-type situation, like they do in Belleville. This legislation protects double-hatters. It's in the best interests of many of our smaller municipalities.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: The volunteers are really important in these smaller communities. I just had the opportunity to pass a note over: a letter that I had written on behalf of the Belleville fire department to the Minister of Transportation. A lot of people in urban centres, because they're served by professional firefighters, don't understand, when they go into a smaller, rural area that has volunteer firefighters, that those volunteers have green flashing lights on their personal vehicles. If you come from an urban centre like Toronto, for instance, you might have no idea, if a vehicle pulls up behind you with a green flashing light, that you're supposed to pull off to the side of the road and allow them to pass because they're on their way to a fire, a motor vehicle accident or some other type of potentially tragic situation.

The Belleville fire department, at its own expense, made up these signs to put on the local roads, advising people from out of town—the Bay of Quinte tourism area is quite a hot spot for people from urban centres to come visit these days because of our award-winning wines. The green-light issue is a big issue. They paid for these signs—professionally constructed, reflective signs. The

Ministry of Transportation isn't allowing them to put the signs up on their provincial highways. Hopefully we can work together with the Minister of Transportation. He has promised to get to the bottom of that—but I digress.

The rest of the bill: You know what? I do agree with the members of the third party when they stomp their feet and point at the government, saying that the democratic rights of workers are being removed in schedule 2 of the bill. I actually do agree with them on that. The thing that surprises me most is that the government is saying that when two unions come together in one workplace, and you have one union representing 60% and another representing 40%, 60% is larger and should therefore swallow up the 40% in the other union.

The thing that's amazing to me is that the members of the government are saying that 60% is more than 40%. Because when you look at the Hydro One sell-off that's occurring right now, they believe that by having a 40% share in Hydro One, they have the majority of Hydro One, yet when it comes to this bill, clearly they know that 60% is larger than 40%. It's amazing to me that they've been able to draw that distinction. I would fully agree with them that 60 is more than 40; however, when it comes to Hydro One, it's a completely different story.

In the second schedule of the act, we've got several interesting questions being raised by amendments that the government raises. Currently, when a workplace is represented by two or more unions, as I just described, the members vote on which union they want to have representing their bargaining unit, and that is as it should be. In instances like this, democracy should always win out, and it harms no one to simply conduct that vote to determine which union will represent the workforce there. This provision has kept some major unions from supporting this bill, and it's completely unnecessary.

It's likely that this measure is a reaction to an issue that occurred last year, when the government forced the merger of the OPA and the IESO and ran into workplaces represented by multiple unions. That having been said, a founding principle of the organized labour movement has always been the democratic contributions of its members and their right to participate in their governance and the bargaining process. It's interesting here that the government would seek to amend a process that has existed for decades, and simply state that if 60% of a workforce belongs to a union, the other 40% of employees are automatically represented by that union, by virtue of working in the same workplace.

This government does, however, have a tendency to undermine the democratic process at times, especially in local municipalities when it suits them. We've seen that borne out in legislation in this House, time and time again. We're seeing it borne out with the Hydro One sell-off—the Hydro One fire sale that's currently occurring. One hundred and eighty-five municipalities have said they're not in favour of selling Hydro One. Were they ever given an opportunity to provide any input on the sell-off of Hydro One? No, they weren't. The fire sale of Hydro One has been anything but a democratic process.

We've seen it with the Green Energy Act. The municipalities have actually had planning authority taken away from them as a result of the Green Energy Act and now, to a much smaller but still significant extent, in this bill, in schedule 2.

The final schedule of this bill deals with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I know, as we've discussed here this afternoon, that WSIB claims are some of the most frequent issues we deal with in our constituency offices every day. Every time we start dealing with the WSIB legislation, we have to use a scalpel instead of a butcher knife to cut away at it. As the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane said, when you phone the WSIB looking for an answer for one of your constituents, it's always deny, deny, deny. I agree with him wholeheartedly on that. It's a big problem for all of us in our constituency offices, and nothing is happening to fix that problem. It's something we are all dealing with.

1730

While we will be supporting this bill and we look forward to some amendments—the members of the third party are looking for the complete removal, I believe, of schedule 2 of the act when it does get to committee. We will be supporting this at second reading to get it to committee.

It's important to clean up legislation from time to time, and what we're seeing cleaned up hasn't been fixed up since 1997. It's time to make some changes, and I look forward to commenting on this further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've just got to say to my friend who talked, maybe one of the things we should do, if we're having problems with the WSIB, is to call Elizabeth Witmer. She was a member of this assembly and knows well the inner workings of the Workers' Compensation Board. If we were to call Ms. Witmer, I'm sure she's prepared to deal with her former colleagues, especially in the Conservative Party, and deal with some of the problems at WSIB.

I want to say—because this particular bill is troubling—that there's a number of parts of this bill that are, quite frankly, quite supportable. Who can argue with some of the motherhood and apple pie issues in this bill that we can support? But the other parts of the bill are, quite frankly, a step backwards. Where is it that we have a bill that essentially takes away the right for members to decide which unions they're going to be part of, Mr. Speaker? That's unheard of. Everywhere we've ever worked in this province, when it comes to the rights of workers, we've always understood that 50% plus one means something, and that at the end of the day, the members have the right to be able to choose their own union.

Well, what they've done in this bill is put a poison pill in. They've essentially said that workers are going to lose their right to select which union they want to represent them when it comes to bargaining and other conditions of work, as a right that they have with a collective agree-

ment. I'm just saying to the government, why put this poison pill in the bill?

There are things in this bill that we support. Do we not support the issue of how we're going to be able to help firefighters on the issues having to do with presumptive legislation? My God, Andrea Horwath brought that bill forward when she was first elected in this Legislature some years ago. Other members such as Cheri DiNovo brought forward bills in order to deal with presumptive legislation. New Democrats are on side. We're prepared to support, and we will push that bill forward. But putting a poison pill in this I think just shows to what degree the Liberals are playing games with what are the rights of workers, and that is not the way things should be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in the House in response to the member from Prince Edward—Hastings and some of his remarks on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. The member started his remarks about symbolic guillotines falling, as if members of this Legislature were in actual danger. But this bill is actually talking about protecting hard-working Ontarians, giving them more protection from the dangers they face in their workplace and giving them more protections when they get injured in that workplace.

As many members have said this afternoon during debate, I think we can all agree how important the changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act are to ensure that the double-hatters in this province, who give of themselves, sacrifice their private time, their family time, to share the skills that they already have to protect their communities—how important it is that we extend more protections to them.

Certainly, it's incredibly important that those who pay into the workmen's compensation system, who expect that they as workers have certain protections in place—that if they were to become ill in the future or potentially die in the future, there would be benefits that would flow to their families.

These changes to this act I think are incredibly and profoundly important. The whole notion that somebody who may have suffered some kind of latent disease that lay dormant for many years and later on they become ill, perhaps they die—ensuring that their families receive the benefits that those employers and employees paid for, is incredibly important. I hope all members support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's always a pleasure to listen to our colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings engage in debate.

I think I'll just take this moment to restate that this is the time for debate, not the time for statements. I think the Liberal Party has confused making statements with debate. One of the core elements of debate is to put forth an assertion, a proposition, and have the other side challenge it or agree with it or provide their evidence.

We've been doing this for a while now in this House. I asked a number of questions last week during debate on Bill 109. Many members here today, including the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, have again raised the issue about the 60% threshold on union certification of mergers and acquisitions. Not once has any member from the Liberal Party put forth any rationale or any justification for taking away the rights of workers to choose who their bargaining unit is going to be—not once.

That is the purpose of debate, for the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who got up and made his statement just a few moments ago—please, take a moment to respond to the questions during the debate. Have somebody in your communications bureau bring up some new talking points, maybe, to give some creative answers to what the questions are during this debate. Otherwise, you're just making this whole period of time redundant. Please answer some of those questions.

We also raised questions about the WSIB last week, and continued, and still no response. Somebody over there has to be able to do some thinking sometimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to add my voice to the debate. I want to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for his comments. One of the points he brought up, while we've been talking about the fact that this bill takes away the right of workers to choose their bargaining unit—many of the members have brought up this issue.

What the member did, though, in addition, is that he pointed out that this is not just one example; this is part of a larger trend where the government doesn't address the concerns of the people of Ontario and in fact purposely seems to override their concerns time and time again. Whether it's the lack of proper consultations with municipalities or with other partners and stakeholders, there seems to be a trend that the government continues to run roughshod over the concerns of the people of Ontario.

One of the great examples is the current sale of Hydro One. Taking away the ownership of this public asset for absolutely no reason whatsoever, for no justification, for no real, solid evidence-based reasoning, makes no sense.

Similarly, it makes no sense to take away the right of workers to democratically vote for who they want to represent them. It seems to be very basic. As one of my colleagues from the Conservative Party—the opposition—also mentioned, the government has yet to provide any insight into why they're doing it and why they're doing it in a bill which purports to be protecting workers. They simply do not make any sense. They do not coincide. On one hand, you're talking about protecting workers; on the other hand, you're stripping them of a right. Please explain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the members from Timmins–James Bay, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Lanark–

Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and Bramalea–Gore–Malton for their comments.

I would just like to pick up on where the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton left off. What we've been seeing from the members of the government when it comes to debating their own bills is this speed-debating where they're given their three minutes of talking points and they stand up and say exactly what the corner office has instructed them to do. That's exactly what we're seeing from them on the Hydro One file as well.

Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU or the top dog at OPSEU, was in committee earlier this week. He said that every individual member of the government that he has spoken to is against the sale of Hydro One, but they have been told to do exactly what the corner office tells them to do. They've lost their voice.

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If I'm a member of the Liberal government, I am offended at what I'm being told to do by the corner office, because everyone who has come out against the sell-off of Hydro One has had valid reasons as to why this is a bad deal for the province of Ontario. Whether it's members of the official opposition or the third party, or 185 municipalities in Ontario, or the Financial Accountability Officer, or all eight independent officers of the Legislature—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Stop the clock.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, I think we're debating a bill, and I don't believe that the member's remarks are guided towards the bill. I humbly suggest to you that maybe we ask the member to refer his remarks to the issue at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's my opinion that if he gets off line, I'll let him know, but I think he's trying to do a comparative analysis.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will just jump to a comment that was made by the member from Timmins–James Bay when he said that I should be picking up the phone and contacting Liz Witmer to try and fix those problems at the WSIB. You know what? He is absolutely right. If you want to fix something in Ontario these days, you've got to call a Conservative. That's what you've got to do.

We're going to support this bill going forward, get it to committee and make sure that we get the amendments that we need to the bill.

I thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for the support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, although that is a tough line to follow, I can tell you.

I've been here all afternoon and I've heard some very compelling evidence, really, as to why this is a flawed piece of legislation. Just for those people who are

watching, which includes my mom and maybe my husband: Bill 109, Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015—there are three parts to this piece of legislation. It contains amendments to three different bills on three separate and equally important issues, two of which come at the expense of one, which is the poison pill. I'm going to address schedule 2 in a few minutes.

I do want to speak to the entire culture of how legislation comes through to this House. Quite honestly, these omnibus bills that come before us, which—for no good reason; there is no good rationale to do so, and it runs counter to that narrative that we heard from this Premier and from this cabinet that there would be an openness and there would be a transparency to how legislation flows in this place, because people wanted to ensure that legislation would meet the needs of the people that we are elected to serve here in this place.

Unfortunately, we are seeing a pattern from this government—now we're well into this session—it's copying the former federal government, where there is so much in a bill, and yet it doesn't address—there's always a hook, if you will.

We heard about this activist centre—do you remember that, Mr. Speaker?—and that legislation would be progressive and that it would be responding to the needs, the expressed needs, evidence-based needs, of the people of this province.

There isn't anything progressive about this legislation, particularly schedule 2, which involves the stripping of rights of employees to vote for who will represent them. That's a core issue. We will never support any piece of legislation that has this caveat contained within it, and the Liberal government knows that. Yet, they still crafted this piece of legislation with it. Instead of trying to get unanimous support going forward, instead of trying to find consensus—they're going to do what they're going to do. Clearly, they already have.

But this activist centre concept, that's clearly been abandoned, although, quite honestly, there are not a lot of people who really understand what it meant in the first place. It was thought to look like something that might be considered to be progressive. Stripping the rights of employees to choose their representation in the workplace—there isn't anything progressive about that. Certainly, the biggest transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector through the sell-off of Hydro One—there isn't anything progressive about that either. I feel like there's this giant walking contradiction in this place, and it is our job, obviously, as opposition members to draw attention to some of those weaknesses.

In this piece, in Bill 109, I'll give you an example. The issue of WSIB, as has already been stated here in the House all afternoon, is that this is a broken system. It is a long-standing problem for the people of this province who become injured in the workplace and who are seeking compensation—and, in some cases, just seeking compassion. In fact, tomorrow, our labour critic, the member from Welland, is going to be hosting some medical professionals and psychologists who are coming

here to Queen's Park to expose the fact that WSIB has interfered in the medical care of workers in the province of Ontario. That's a serious issue, but it is not a new issue, and all of us know that.

In fact, even going back to May 2012, even after it was included as a key recommendation of the Arthurs commission report of May 2012, it still took the government over three years to implement legislation. There's no need for this. I mean, it is truly about priorities. Some people would say that rushing the sale of Hydro One has moved at breakneck pace. Yet there are issues pertaining to the safety of workers in the province of Ontario that move as slowly as possible. One only has to consider, for instance, the safety of workers who work at heights, which obviously is more and more; or the issue of temporary agencies and the influx of workers who are precarious, part-time and contractual workers in the province of Ontario: This, apparently, is a priority for this government, but not addressing those key safety issues.

The main issue I have primarily, though, with schedule 3 of this is that, while we do, of course, support the procedural provisions against claim suppression, which we know is an issue with the WSIB and workers—it expressly prohibits employers from suppressing claims directly or indirectly. This is good. This is a good piece of the legislation. Employers who are found guilty of claim suppression can be fined up to \$500,000. That's up from \$100,000. That's good. We hope that that might be a deterrent for employers to try to suppress claims. But there is no language in this bill around procedural mechanisms for enforcement or prevention, so you can't ensure that these good intentions are actually going to be followed through on.

We also have Bill 98, which the government did support. This was our member from Oshawa, Ms. French, who brought forward an excellent bill which is more comprehensive, which is more responsive and which there was extensive consultation on.

The Ontario Federation of Labour, as it relates to schedule 3, states that schedule 3 of Bill 109 doesn't go far enough and only goes halfway. This is the pattern for this government. Why not fix it now? There's no excuse. There were excuses in the past: that it was a minority government and that things couldn't move forward—which actually, in my view, was untrue. Minority governments actually provided greater opportunity for us to work together to find consensus and to actually listen to each other and work together. I think that the people of this province primarily were served well in that respect.

Schedule 2 is obviously the non-negotiable piece of the legislation. Just for those who are watching, schedule 2 of Bill 109 removes the requirement of a vote in the case of a merger if one of the existing bargaining agents meets the minimum threshold of 60% of total membership. So if a new bargaining unit meets that threshold, a vote is not required. Of course, we oppose this, as do all of the major public service unions, representing thousands of workers. Why would you put this piece in? There's no good rationale. There's no good reason. It

ignores and overrides the basic principles of workplace democracy. You wouldn't find a move like this in the activist centre, as far as I could tell. There isn't anything progressive about this, and there was no consultation on the overall issue. People would genuinely be surprised. I know that you must be feeling some pressure coming from your constituency.

Also, it's not a burning issue versus the countless other labour issues that are long-standing here in the province of Ontario. So this is something that we will not back down on. It's a core principle that people have the right in their workplaces to come together and to have a vote—to have a democratic process where they are part of that conversation—and select their leadership and to select their representation.

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So here we have a piece of legislation which has some good components of it, but there's this hook that will prevent us from supporting it. As I've said, bringing forward a piece of legislation like this really just adds to the entire cynicism that is growing in the political arena of this province. It's discouraging; it truly is. I think that people in this province deserve better. They deserve more from their politicians. We should set the bar higher when legislation comes to this floor for debate. Obviously we cannot be supportive of it, and we'd be looking to amend and remove schedule 2 in its entirety.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you for the comments thus far.

It has been very interesting. I just wanted to take a minute in reviewing this bill again before I stood. I just want to quote from a letter that was received by the Minister of Labour not too, too long ago. It was a letter from Injured Worker Outreach Services, which represents 14 autonomous injured worker groups across the province. The groups are partially funded by WSIB. As a whole, the groups assist and represent thousands of injured workers. I've got a few bullets of a direct quote from their letter. All of the quotes pertain to this bill.

"After careful consideration of the bill, the IWOS groups' signatories to this document are pleased to offer our support and congratulations to you on these much-needed changes.

"Injured workers' survivors will especially benefit from the changes you have outlined in section 48.1. We are especially pleased that this long-standing issue is being addressed and rectified."

The letter goes on to say, about sections 22.1 and 155.5: "The proposed changes to the issue of claims suppression are also long overdue. The groups are certainly in support of these increases in the financial penalty from \$100,000 to \$500,000 for employers who discourage workers in filing claims."

Mr. Speaker, one final point the letter makes, about section 176.1: "Enshrining a Fair Practices Commissioner and the commission in legislation will ensure that

workers have an independent ombudsman they can contact when those issues arise."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to rise and make a couple of comments on some of the discussion today, particularly around schedule 2. I'm hearing from the third party how serious they are about the fact that there should be a majority of workers that have some say in what organization represents them. I think that flies in the face of the construction industry, where we don't see that. We've had cases in my riding of two people with a card working on a weekend, or a case a couple of years ago in Renfrew, on a New Year's Eve, where they organized a whole company, against the wishes of the vast majority. They aren't given an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights. This was put in by the government on the other side and of course endorsed by this side here. I don't know where the difference is.

In that case here and the one in Renfrew, more than half of the people involved quit because they didn't want to work under the basis of the union in that case. Where are the differences? In that case, two people were able to exercise their will over 40 or 45 other workers. That has happened in my riding; it has happened in numerous places across this province.

We agree. We think things like that should be democratically—the opportunity should be to choose your own organized labour. I don't know why the difference. I introduced a bill in the last term and reintroduced it in this term again. We didn't get support from the third party or from the party opposite here, the government.

I think it's a very poorly understood issue across the public. I know it has garnered a lot of support for this government during some of the elections, but I think it's the wrong thing to do and I think it's time for that to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The member from Kitchener-Waterloo emphasized how important it is to protect democracy. I want to mention how ironic it is that in this place, which is a place of democracy, a place where we all represent our communities—we have been elected to represent our communities—the government would enact legislation that would remove a democratic right.

There are different circumstances that apply. I want to point out some significant differences between what the member who just spoke from the Conservative Party pointed out with respect to card certification and what we're talking about today with respect to the membership choosing who they want to represent them as a bargaining unit. In circumstances where there are mergers, where a hospital is merged with a larger hospital, the workers should have a right to choose whether to remain with their existing bargaining unit, move in with the incoming bargaining unit, or some alternative. They should be able to choose that. They're already in an organized labour position. They're going to decide who to go with.

That scenario is a very different scenario than whether or not we want to make it easier for people to organize. In general, it's very clear; the evidence shows that wherever there is organized labour, people have better working conditions, both in the public and in the private sector. The evidence is absolutely clear that workers enjoy more rights and that society has better conditions for workers. That is something that we can look at with very clear objective evidence. On this issue, though, it's absolutely clear that being able to choose who represents you is fundamentally important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to have another opportunity to stand up and speak about this important legislation. I was speaking, in my first turnaround at this, to the significant amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I listened to one of my colleagues, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, make reference to the increase in the penalties that will be put in place, going up to \$500,000. The point that I would have made were I able to get up again and respond would have been to say, "That's why it's important: We're increasing protection." I don't think the member disagrees with me on that. I think that's an important element.

I think there are a number of parts of this legislation, particularly related to the WSIA, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act—greater fairness for survivors, I think, is another important element, in cases of work-related death. Bill 109 would enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker engaged in the same profession as that out of which the deceased worker's injury arose.

These may seem like things that are relatively obvious because they make sense. The fact is, I think it's important that we put these clear protections in place. With my number of years now as MPP for Thunder Bay–Superior North, one of the most important relationships

that I've had from the very beginning, when I first got elected until now, is with the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, who do remarkable work on behalf of the people who need it perhaps the most.

I'm delighted to stand here and support the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo: two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the comments. It is interesting that there's nothing substantive coming back as far as the rationale around schedule 2, which specifically is our concern. It's disappointing that there's no commentary, there's no rationale and there is no good reason for this section, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, to be contained within this piece of legislation. So one has to wonder why it is there. Why would this government actively and aggressively be moving to override the basic principles of workplace democracy? Why?

I think that that is the overriding question. Why isn't this government doing a number of things? Why is this government selling off Hydro One and transferring wealth from the public sector to the private sector? Why is this government continuing to bring forward pieces of legislation like this, which involve the stripping of rights of workers in the workplace?

All that we can do is raise our voices in this place and bring the concerns of our constituents to the floor of this Legislature and hope that someday, at some point, this government decides to listen to the real concerns of Ontarians and bring forward legislation which is truly progressive and meets the needs of workers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Thursday 5 November 2015

Jeudi 5 novembre 2015



**Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac**

**Président
L'honorable Dave Levac**

**Clerk
Deborah Deller**

**Greffière
Deborah Deller**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased, today, to share my time with the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member for Huron–Bruce, for allowing me to participate in this debate.

Bill 122, of course, is the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act. I must say I was quite intrigued when this act first was proposed. I thought that there was an opportunity here because, as many members know, I sat on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Speaker, I believe you were the Chair of that particular committee.

A select committee is rather unique in its makeup in that every recommendation that comes forward is approved, endorsed and agreed upon by all three parties in the House. We did that with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We, in fact, spent 18 months doing that. It was a long journey, as you can imagine, because with mental health issues it is not particularly easy for presenters to share their stories and explain how they have been treated or, in many cases, mistreated as a result of their mental health illness.

I was very much looking forward to seeing what was in Bill 122. I have to say, I really believe there is a missed opportunity here. Bill 122—and I did go to the ministerial briefing, so I know from what I speak; this is not from reading some two-page bill summary—is very specifically related to fixing one issue. I get that. I understand it. When the court imposes deadlines and makes

recommendations, as legislators we must react to that. I understand that. However, we are opening up the Mental Health Act, and there were some very specific recommendations from the all-party committee that I think we should have been bringing forward with Bill 122.

Now, having said that, there is an opportunity for everyone to fix their mistakes, because when Bill 122 gets referred to committee, if we have unanimous consent, we can bring forward some of the amendments and some of the recommendations that are in this select committee report. I would urge government members who sit on whatever committee Bill 122 ultimately gets referred to, that they seriously consider that. Again, I'm going to spend most of my time referring to the recommendations, all-party supported, that were given as a result of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

There were a number of recommendations related to justice issues, courts and corrections. One of the things the select committee found out very quickly was that services for court mental health workers—these are some of the recommendations we brought forward and that I would like to see incorporated into Bill 122. Even though I understand this is to solve a very particular fix—I get it—we all understand that there are very few opportunities for us to add to and amend certain legislation. We have that opportunity with Bill 122 right now. I would hate to see after—this report is almost five years old—that we don't take the opportunity to move forward.

Specifically related to justice and the court system, the select committee recommended: “The services of court mental health workers should be made widely available across all regions of Ontario, in order to divert more individuals with a mental illness or addiction out of the justice system and into appropriate mental health and addictions services and supports.”

If you go back to what is the nub of the issue with Bill 122, this recommendation works very well, because it's all about incarcerated individuals who have mental illness and their access to service.

The second recommendation: “Additional mental health, drug treatment, and youth mental health courts should be created across all regions of Ontario, to provide more appropriate services for individuals with a mental illness or addiction.”

Again, Bill 122 is a result of a court order and a court issue related to an individual who is incarcerated, who is in an institution and isn't getting the services they need. So this recommendation does fit very nicely with Bill 122.

“The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should direct police forces across the province

to provide training for officers who may encounter people suffering from mental illnesses and addictions." I don't think we have to look too far in the news to see the value of what that recommendation could and would do.

Probably the most important recommendation that we keep coming back to with this select committee: "The core basket of mental health and addictions services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system navigator and appropriate community services."

I get that this comes because you have to do something. The court has imposed a deadline; I believe it's December 23. But we have an opportunity, with those very specific four recommendations, that I believe would actually improve Bill 122 and that are a very appropriate match for what you are trying to accomplish.

Instead of just opening up the legislation and fixing a very specific part of it because you were forced to through litigation, why don't you actually look at the bigger picture and say, "We actually have some half-decent research that is a result of 18 months of study, 18 months of deputations from court officers, from people with lived experiences, from family members who were part of this discussion"? You could improve what you have already started with Bill 122. As I have said before, I truly believe this is a missed opportunity.

Sometimes we forget that some of the hard work and some of the research have already been done, and I believe that has been done with this report. There are members of cabinet who were on this committee and who know very well what this could mean to the lives and families of individuals who have mental health illnesses. I urge the members of the committee that ultimately will be sitting and reviewing Bill 122, when it gets to committee, that they allow for unanimous consent so that we can go further than what a very limited Bill 122 is offering us right now today. I have no qualms with what is being suggested in Bill 122. I just think we could do a lot more when we have the opportunity and when the legislation is open, which is what is afforded to us right now. I will leave it at that.

0910

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to put on the record that this whole issue in regard to how we deal with our mental health system is something that I think touches many people in this Legislature, as it touches many other lives across this province.

My sister was schizophrenic and dealt with the system for years and years, when it came to making sure she was safe. I've got to tell you, having a family that was supportive and a system that was engaged with my sister allowed her to live safely through her entire bout of schizophrenia, which started at about age 20. Unfortunately, she died when she was 60 of breast cancer, but it wasn't the schizophrenia that got her in the end.

I have to say that it is so, so important that we, first of all, identify what the issues are with the individual so that we can try to at least marshal the types of support that that person needs in order to be able to survive. My sister, in the case of the Canadian Mental Health Association in Timmins, was very well supported by the workers there and by the ACT team, and where the family was not able to provide certain services, they were able to be there and help my sister through a lot of what she had to go through. She ended up living a very productive life. Louise lived on her own in her own apartment for the last five or six years of her life. She was able to manage things quite effectively. We had to put some supports around her in order to make sure she was able to function, but once that was in place, it worked fairly well. The CCAC came in and provided her some basic support that she needed in order to be able to function. The Canadian Mental Health Association was there, and myself, as the only living relative left in Timmins for the last five years of her life, was there, along with my wife and daughter, to assist where we could.

The real point here is that it's not just the system that has to respond; families also have to respond and be there for their loved ones.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me this morning to stand in my place here and represent the people of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. I'd like to thank the member from Dufferin-Caledon for her remarks, as well as the member from Timmins-James Bay. The member from Timmins-James Bay made some great points. There's no family, I don't think, in the province of Ontario that hasn't been affected by someone whom we love who has been affected by a mental health issue or an addiction.

That's why we as a government, when we took office in 2003, saw it as a priority. Since that time, we've invested close to a total of a billion dollars now in mental health and addictions strategies and services. We plan to continue our investments and increase funding by \$220 million over the next three years. That's our commitment as a government in recognizing the impact that it does have on our communities and the economy of the province of Ontario.

Due to our investments, there are more than 55,000 additional children and youth now receiving the care that they need. Also, we have invested over \$11 million to place 144 mental health nurses in our schools. That's important, Mr. Speaker, because it's important that we provide those supports early on in one's life to give them a good, fresh start in contributing to the great province of Ontario. We have more than 770 mental health workers serving in communities, schools and in court, and more than \$2 million in funding supporting training and professional development for aboriginal mental health and addictions workers that serve our aboriginal youth and children. We've created 19 new specialized nurse practitioners specializing in eating disorders, who now help close to 500 children.

There are many more that I could talk about, the investments we made, but I look forward to this getting to committee so that we can have some more debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to acknowledge my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon. She always is extremely well-prepared, on this item, in particular. I know she has done a great, great job on the mental health select committee, which our former colleague Christine Elliott also was very involved in. To all members—it was an all-party committee, and I think they did great work.

What I've really heard throughout this debate is how far we have come. That's a great thing. There used to be a lot of stigma associated, and sadly, in some cases there still is, but we've come a long way, where people are willing to actually acknowledge that they are having some challenges. I think it's equally important for other people to step up and be prepared to be there for other people.

In my great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, we have a resource that, sadly, has come about as a result of a young man, Wes Cameron, taking his own life. His mother, Yolanda, and father, Jamie, have come out and established Wes for Youth Online. That's a resource that, certainly, is wonderful in our own backyard, but with the advent, of course, of electronic technology, it's available to anyone across the world that can actually utilize that.

Keystone children services is wonderful, and the Canadian Mental Health Association, again, has great services. We've just had some more money made available so that we have 24/7 access, which is great, but I think we can't stop there. We can't rest, because I believe—and I believe my colleague, Mr. Yurek, from Elgin—Middlesex—London, phrased it in the way that mental health has to be treated the same as physical health problems. We put a lot of emphasis on physical health and the resources into it, but mental health is equally as challenging, in some cases, maybe more. I think we need to ensure that that has equal treatment.

For this year's World Mental Health Day, I think the theme really was focused on dignity in mental health and, again, ensuring that we have the resources and the services there for people when they need them.

I would like to just reach out to everyone who's either listening or watching at home—and all of us can play a role. We can be watching and always just have our ears ready, to open our door for someone who is having challenges and find help—along with them, I'll do my part.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to congratulate the member from Dufferin—Caledon for her remarks. She and I served on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Five years later, there has been very, very little done—one half of a recommendation that has been acted upon.

This bill is so, so narrow. It only came here because the court forced us to deal with this. But there is such a

pent-up demand to make changes to the Mental Health Act. You can see it by the broad views that are brought forward by the members of this House. Sadly, Speaker, we will be the only ones who will get to talk about mental health, and for a very limited amount of minutes will we be allowed to do this. Shame on all of us.

The people out there are ready to talk about mental health. They are ready to effect change about mental health. They know that the bill that we have now, the Mental Health Act, does not serve us in 2015 anymore. It was the best we could do 20 years ago, but in 20 years, everything has changed: stigma, treatment, the way that we support people with mental illness. Everything has changed.

Within this bill that is so, so narrow, there are some huge flaws. It cannot go through the way it is. Although it will meet, on paper, what the court has told us had to be done, on the ground, for the people who offer that care, the support is not there. The facilities have not been built. The clinical areas do not exist—a real shame. Those people deserve to have treatment. If they're going to be held, on form, they should have access to treatment. This is not the case, not because of the law, but because of a lack of resources dedicated to mental illness.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the comments. I very much appreciate it.

I will go back to where I started. There were nine members on that select committee. I'm not going to name names because I've never been very good at matching the person with the riding, but four of those members of the nine-member committee are now in cabinet. We have an opportunity here. If we get unanimous consent at committee, we can incorporate some of the—again, I will say—all-party recommendations that are included in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions' report. So allow us that opportunity, because, to my colleague's point, we're not going to have a fulsome debate here in this chamber. We need to get that opportunity to add, to expand, to improve Bill 122 when it gets to committee.

0920

I spoke about four recommendations. There are actually another four that, again, directly relate to courts and the justice system. This is not a new issue. We were talking about this. We were bringing forward recommendations five years ago because we saw the challenges then. To fix one very specific, narrow part as a result of a court order and ignore the work that happened in the select committee I think is a terrible injustice to the people who presented, and, quite frankly, I think it's a missed opportunity. We have that opportunity now, today, with the opening, through Bill 122, of the Mental Health Act, and I would urge members to seriously consider allowing that unanimous consent so that we can go beyond the very narrow scope of what Bill 122 is proposing right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House to debate important issues like mental health. Each one of us in our own communities and our own families has been touched by mental health issues. Although this bill is a narrow one, it gives us an opportunity to raise awareness about mental health issues, about, still, the lack of resources in the mental health sector, while we're talking about this particular bill.

While New Democrats certainly agree that it's necessary to amend the Mental Health Act to comply with the Court of Appeal ruling from December 2014, which ruled that portions of the act violate section 7 of the charter, we wonder why this is being brought forward only a couple of months before that December deadline. Perhaps it is, as the member from Caledon—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —Dufferin–Caledon just spoke about, the fact that this is an opportunity to open up the Mental Health Act that hasn't been looked at in more than 20 years. Maybe it is the government wanting to be able to stifle any other amendments to the act by bringing it forward at this late date.

The court was also very clear that the government cannot escape its duties under the charter simply by saying that psychiatric hospitals are part of hospital corporations and not run by the provincial government directly. We now know that that isn't true. The court basically said that for a government that's intent and keen on privatizing services—the court sent a very clear message: "The province cannot 'contract out' of its charter responsibilities by" delegating "statutory powers to a private entity."

As I said, we're disappointed that the Liberal government waited nine months to bring this forward. Now we're racing against the clock, and I'm sure we'll shortly be having the government say, "We want to time-allocate this bill," when many of us want to get up and talk about the lack of mental health services in our area and all of the good things that we need to do for clients and patients and their families around the entire mental health issue. The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions certainly spent I think a couple of years—

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was 18 months.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —18 months working on that, and came up with 20-some recommendations, of which only a half of one recommendation has currently been implemented.

We talked about the ability of perhaps the government allowing us to open up the act entirely and bring forward the recommendations and probably other amendments to the bill. But as we all know, unless that particular section of an act is open, the government normally rules us out of order with our amendments.

The plea that I've heard from many members here is to open up the entire act, regardless of the section that this particular bill deals with, and let's have a fulsome discussion and debate and improve the Mental Health Act for all of those many hundreds of thousands of people who actually suffer with mental health issues in this province.

If the Legislature fails to meet the December 23 deadline, the offending sections would become invalid, and that certainly would or could put public safety at risk for the 330 patients who are currently being held on an indefinite involuntary detention, if they are released. The member from Nickel Belt, when she did her one-hour lead on this issue, talked about many of these patients being the sickest of the sick. Some of them have been held for 20-plus years.

I want to segue into nurses working in mental health facilities, nurses working in hospitals across our province. Just recently—I think it was last Sunday night or Saturday night—Marketplace actually did an exposé on violence in the workplace for nurses across this province. In a five-year period, I believe from 2008 to 2013, 800 nurses in the province of Ontario and 4,000 nurses across Canada have actually been injured in the workplace.

I would hazard a guess that many of these nurses work in psychiatric facilities in our province. We know that there have been nurses murdered in mental health facilities in past years; there have been nurses severely beaten. The problem that came up, though, in this exposé was that although the nurses are reporting these injuries across the province of Ontario and across Canada, and there have been investigations done by the Ministry of Labour, only three charges have been laid in 700 reported incidents.

Nurses are now hesitating to actually report: one, for fear of reprisal, perhaps from their hospitals or employers; and two, because nothing is getting done. How can 700 nurses file complaints with the Ministry of Labour about being assaulted, both verbally and physically, by patients, by families, and the Minister of Labour has only laid three charges? There is something unconscionable about that.

I see a huge pattern here in Ontario and across Canada: Nursing health care is the fourth from the highest of the most dangerous occupations in relation to injuries here in the province of Ontario and across the country. There is something wrong with that because nursing is a caring profession. That's what nurses do; that's why nurses go into nursing training, to actually look after patients, and at the end of the day they should be able to go home without being injured in their workplace.

I also wanted to talk, while I have the opportunity, about a psychiatrist who lived in my area for many years and was involved with doing forensic assessments, not only in long-term-care facilities in the province but in our federal prison systems as well. His name is Dr. Thoppil Abraham, and he is now retired back to India. He worked out of the Niagara Health System for many, many years. He was a great community activist. Even after he retired from the actual hospital system, he volunteered in our community and he volunteered in the Kitchener-Waterloo and London area as well to assist people who were living in poverty and had mental health issues to be able to acquire ODSP or CPP. He would go out to those communities as a volunteer. He didn't need to do it. But he was so compassionate in his care to people living with

mental health issues and all the injustices that they face that he in his retirement years did that. Eventually, about two years ago, he went back to India for a visit and decided that he would retire there.

We are celebrating in my riding our 40th anniversary, and Dr. Abraham will be getting a lifetime achievement award from the NDP riding association in my riding at the end of this month. Unfortunately, he's not going to be here to be able to accept it.

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It's funny, we talk about the stigma of mental health. During my time working for the Ontario Nurses' Association and representing nurses who sometimes would have their LTD denied or other benefits denied, I would often have to call upon Thoppil to assist me in providing some medical reports that would assist a nurse to actually get benefits from Great-West Life or Manulife. This is just a little story about that stigma. So I would arrive at his office to actually go and pick up a report. His waiting room would be bursting at the seams with patients waiting to see him, and they would be shocked to see me, because, of course, they knew me. I had been the mayor of their city; I had been a city councillor. It was like, "What's she doing here?" On occasion a patient would say, "Cindy, what are you doing here?" I'd say, "Well, I'm here to see my psychiatrist, what do you think I'm doing here?" There still is this stigma about mental health.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to speak about—the member from Nickel Belt, this morning, in her two-minute hit talked about it—the services that aren't there. Some 40% of the inmates in our provincial jails actually have mental health issues. Many of them are there because of their mental health issue and ended up there when they were arrested at some point in time. There are no programs or services being administered to these inmates.

In fact, when the RNAO was here last year and the year before doing their registered nurses' lobby day with us—that Shelley Martel, the former member from Nickel Belt, actually assists them with—I had the opportunity to meet with some nurses who actually worked in our provincial corrections system. They said that it is very distressing for them that there are all of these inmates sitting in our provincial system—I'm sure some in our federal system as well—and they're not receiving any care, any counselling, any psychotherapy at all, other than their short interaction with the registered nurses of whom there are few. I think it is one nurse to every 130 inmates in the system. You know, prisoners are supposed to be getting rehabilitation while they're in our corrections system, but that isn't happening. So that is problematic as well.

I wanted to also talk about the closure of the psychiatric beds in the province. During that time that I was working for the Ontario Nurses' Association, I was involved in some of those mergers and amalgamations. One that comes to mind was the merger of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre and the former Clarke Institute, which is now the Centre for Addiction and Mental

Health. At that point in time, I think the PCs were in government—correct me if I'm wrong—and a lot of the psychiatric beds across the province were systematically closed.

Unfortunately, the appropriate supports weren't put in place. So, even today, many of the homeless people that you see in urban areas, particularly, are people with mental health issues. It doesn't matter whether you are living in a big city—although I think the supports may be better in urban areas than they certainly are in rural areas in the north or in smaller communities like Niagara—the supportive piece just isn't in place. So many people with mental health issues exist on ODSP, or CPP, if they happened to have a period of working for 10 years in their life. So these are people who are living on \$1,000 a month. They're supposed to be able to get housing and eat and, somehow, get some psychiatric care.

Now, I can tell you, in the Niagara region, for example, where the Liberal government, actually, has closed half of our hospitals and merged all of our psychiatric beds into one site, it's very problematic for people. People who are living on the edge with mental health issues sometimes have burned out their families and their friends, so their only friends are their local community hospitals.

I can tell you, having worked at the Welland hospital on and off for 20 years, that many of our psychiatric patients who would be released from the in-patient unit would hang out at the hospital, and we were their only supports and friends. We'd see them in the cafeteria when they would come in for, perhaps, a group session. We would see them at the snack bar, and we'd sit and talk to them. Today we have one psychiatric unit, at the St. Catharines site of the Niagara Health System. We do not have an adequate transportation system in-site in the Niagara region, so it's very difficult for patients and their families to access the supports that they need.

In my own building, it's called an open-doors concept, at Canal View Homes. It's a 70-unit apartment building over some commercial space. It's where my constituency office is. There are 54 units dedicated to people with mental health situations. When it started out, when it was built 20 years ago, it was a supportive-housing model. They had two support workers in place Monday to Friday, and sometimes on the weekends if they were having special events. They would organize all kinds of—you know, Valentine's parties, and they would take them out to various festivals that were going on in our community.

But about three years ago, that funding support stopped. For \$100,000, all of those activities for 54 tenants in my building stopped. There was one tenant, who still lives there—her name is Mary Jane Huneault, and I've talked about her before here in the Legislature—who cycled in and out of psychiatric units for most of her adult life. But for that 20-year period that there were two support workers in place—probably making about \$40,000 a year each, with benefits—she never had one admission to the in-patient mental health unit.

Since that supportive money has been removed, eight people have had to leave their units, because they could

not function independently without those supports. A number of them have had admissions to the in-patient unit in St. Catharines, where they have no transportation to get them there or for their friends and families to come and meet them.

This whole issue of mental health is not going away. It's probably a much bigger issue than any physical illnesses that we can talk about. A number of members have talked about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions that came up with 20-plus recommendations and the need to open up this Mental Health Act to get us there.

I hope that the government is intently listening and that they'll give all of the parties the opportunity to table amendments, regardless of whether that section of the bill is open or not. Let's have a fulsome discussion at the committee level about that.

We know that there are over 400 agencies for adult mental health issues, and I think 300-plus agencies for children and youth with mental health issues. The member from London-Fanshawe brought forward a bill—I can't remember the number of the bill, a private member's bill—about a month ago, or two months ago. It talked about the government developing oversight for mental health issues, so that we make sure that all of our resources are being used in the best way and that people in Welland, Nickel Belt, the rural areas of the member from Timmins-James Bay's riding and in aboriginal communities all have the same access to mental health services, and that people in Toronto, Hamilton and London, where there are bigger communities and more resources—that everyone has the opportunity to have those resources available to them as well.

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Back to the bill, certainly we will be supporting the bill. We know that we need to move forward with this and make sure that not only are these patients who are detained looked after, assessed and provided the appropriate support that they need in communities—some of them may be released to communities, though, that I talked about, where supports aren't available. We need to make sure that the supports are there for them.

We also need to make sure that as we are moving some increased authority to the Consent and Capacity Board, we also put the resources in place, because, as we've heard from a number of people who talked about this, when the court is the authority and makes the orders, the resources are put in place to make sure that whatever treatment is needed is actually accomplished. We need to make sure the resources are put in place, as the authority increases for the consent board, to make sure that when they order things and make recommendations, the resources are available to those people who continue to be detained or are released to the community to make sure they have what they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to Bill 122 and to thank the member from Welland for her intervention in this debate.

There were a few things that she said that I agree with, in that mental health is becoming a bigger issue. It relates, I think, to the positive of us being able to have a conversation now about mental health. It used to have—I know she also talked about that—a stigma, and for us, being able to talk about mental health is so important.

For 12 years of my life, I worked side by side in conjunction with individuals that she mentioned as well, which is psychiatric nurses. It is a difficult job, and we need to acknowledge the great work that they do.

I'm going to speak a little bit too in my remaining time about the why.

The government is actually looking at amending the Mental Health Act in response to the Ontario Court of Appeal decision. I know a lot has been talked about that. So I think in that time frame, since the court struck down the CCB's inability to tailor some of those conditions, the ministry has discussed the Ontario Court of Appeal decision with the CCB, the Ontario Review Board and the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, and asked for their thoughts on this amendment. As well, the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council, which includes people with lived experience and family members, was consulted.

We wanted to make sure that these amendments that are now being proposed match what the court struck down and has given us the time to look at and to do.

With that, again, it is always my honour to stand up in this House and speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely a pleasure.

As I have said all the way through this debate, the concern that I think we have all shared is the stigma that still sometimes remains. We have certainly come a long way in opening some doors, but I think we all have to be open to the challenges of mental health and the impact that it has on the person that is suffering from it, but also the family and many of the people around the outside of a person who has that type of challenge.

I want to bring credit to my colleague, our health critic Jeff Yurek from Elgin-Middlesex-London. What Jeff said in his remarks is that mental health is equally important as physical health. It really is something that we have to be paying attention to and we have to put the resources in. This bill is something that I believe my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon, Sylvia Jones, suggests, if we can get it to committee and get unanimous consent—all three parties worked on the select committee—we could move forward very quickly. We could put legislation in place that is truly going to have an impact on the ground.

This year, World Mental Health Day was focused on dignity in mental health. Sadly, people with mental illnesses are often faced with misunderstanding and even blame, as my colleague Mr. Yurek said. The Ontario PC Party believes we have a responsibility to raise awareness of what can be done to ensure people with mental health conditions live with dignity, respect and inclusion.

There are so many people out there, and what we want to do is applaud and commend those organizations, the volunteers, the front-line staff members that work with those people who are struggling with mental health challenges. It's a hugely challenging area.

My oldest son, Zach, is taking college courses right now to be a youth mental health worker. I'm very proud of him to be able to think from that perspective, that he wants to be that, because it's a very challenging career to be out on the front lines every day, dealing with people who struggle with those types of challenges. So I commend him.

Again to the nurses, the front-line staff and the people in volunteer capacities in almost all of our organizations: thank you for what you do. We look forward to better results in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'd like to thank my colleague from Welland, who really didn't touch enough on the fact that she's a nurse and has faced this for a number of years. As we watched, we are now seeing in mental health that one in five will have mental health challenges in the province of Ontario.

When we take a look at this bill—also, my colleague from Welland touched on this—this has nothing to do with parties. This has to do with us getting it right. They need our support; they need our dollars, and how can you do that? Well, take a look around here at the MPPs who are here. We have nurses, both Conservative and NDP. We have doctors. We have the talent right here in this room to have a debate and an honest discussion on how we fix a crisis in the province of Ontario.

When you take a look at my riding of Niagara Falls, what they did in Niagara Falls was closed beds. So we have mental health patients—and most mental health patients, by the way, are living in poverty. Those are some of the problems of mental health. They have marriage split-ups. There are lots of problems. In a lot of cases, they don't have cars. They can't drive 20 minutes to St. Catharines. There isn't bus service to get them there.

Who's now becoming responsible for mental health in Niagara? It made no sense to close beds and pull out the services—absolutely none. But what's happening—I don't know if it's happening in other communities; I'm sure it's happening in rural communities in the province of Ontario, where police officers are now taking care of the mental health. What they do is, they pick them up, drive them to St. Catharines, and then, because of the reporting system that they have, they're sitting in our hospitals for four, five and six hours, or sometimes the entire shift. Is that how we want to treat mental health in the province of Ontario? I say no.

Then when you take a look at nurses' safety—I've only got a few seconds left—that has to be a concern. We have to make sure that our workers, our nurses are going to work and have the tools—that they're not getting injured on the job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think this morning we're hearing a great degree of concurrence among all sides in the House that we need to move forward on this. I've been very impressed at some of the thoughtful and incisive comments made by my colleagues on all sides. I want to comment them for the thought that is going into this act, not only while it's here in the House, but before it got to the House in the work being done by committee.

My colleague from Niagara Falls very movingly pointed out some of the issues he faces. In an area like Mississauga and Brampton, we actually have some of the opposite issues which, nonetheless, also point to the need for action. In a region like Mississauga and Brampton, every single year the equivalent of the population of the city of St. Marys moves to our two cities. Each and every year, it means we have to do the equivalent of building St. Marys, Ontario.

One of the issues we would face in the fast-growing areas, particularly those around the edge of Toronto in the 905 belt, is the problems of growth. In my own community, where I've campaigned very aggressively for increased funding for autism and health care and for treatment of mental health—in one of the areas in Peel region, we've managed to get something that we've long sought, which is our proportional share of funding for mental health problems. We've now managed to do that in Peel region, where we represent some 9% of the population of Ontario. That's now approximately what we're allocated in funding.

So in areas like Mississauga and Brampton, our problem is galloping growth, and I'm hoping that the provisions in this act will enable us to meet that challenge as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Welland. You have two minutes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to all of the members for your comments in this debate.

The one positive thing about this bill is that it has given us the opportunity to debate some other issues related to mental health in this House that we never get the opportunity to speak to.

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I'm sure we all have challenges in our areas, but I think if we didn't silo mental health the way that is—my understanding is that mental health falls under 12 different ministries. Maybe we need to be having a look at each one of those ministries and figuring out how much it is costing us in policing and corrections because we're using the police to deal with mental health issues, as opposed to health care advocates. How much is it costing us in corrections to keep somebody housed in a correctional facility—\$40,000, \$60,000 a year that could be used right in our community to provide those services? How much is it costing us in health care or in our schools?

I think it would be incumbent upon the government to go back and have a look at that, even if they tried a pilot

project and moved some of those resources into mental health to make sure that we're doing the best that we can for every person and every family here in the province of Ontario that deals with these issues on a daily basis.

Even the cost of health care unrelated to mental health—there's a huge cost there as well when people don't have the appropriate resources that they need when they have mental health issues.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this morning to speak in response to the government's Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, which was introduced by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as a government bill on Sept. 23, 2015.

While I think there is general agreement in the House that this bill should be supported and will pass at second reading—this is second reading debate—I think it's necessary to point out that this is an example of the government's legislative procrastination. This is something that has been talked about—actually, the court case I believe was last year, and the government has almost left this literally to the eleventh hour in terms of bringing it forward in the Legislature and having the debate. The House is scheduled to rise for the Christmas break in December—December 10, I believe—and we have to get this bill passed before then or we're told there are fairly severe consequences. Really, the government should have brought forward this bill for debate earlier. It should have been introduced earlier, and I think we have to put that on the record.

But at the same time, we recognize that there was a court case. The Ontario Court of Appeal found that certain provisions of the existing Mental Health Act related to the review process for long-term—meaning six months or more—stay in terms of involuntary patients were found to be unconstitutional, which, again, necessitates the government to respond.

I understand that the Court of Appeal found that “by failing to provide the Consent and Capacity Board ... with the powers to ‘ensure that the conditions of a person’s long-term detention are tailored to reflect the person’s actual level of risk, moving towards their ultimate [re]integration,’” the Mental Health Act, as it is currently constituted, “violates the right to life, liberty and security of the person.”

In finding that the Mental Health Act “framework did not provide sufficient procedural oversight and protections, the Court of Appeal highlighted the” Consent and Capacity Board’s “lack of powers:

“—to determine the security level (both within and outside of a given facility), privileges (including community access), therapy and treatment of long-term involuntary patients; and

“—to craft orders that would ensure an appropriate balance between public safety and patient liberty.

The Court of Appeal suspended the effect of its judgment for one year (until December 23, 2015) to provide

the Legislature with time to respond to the decision and amend the legislation accordingly.”

I express appreciation to the Ontario hospital board for doing this backgrounder on Bill 122 that I made reference to just now.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario PC caucus recognizes the devastating effects that mental illness and the attached stigma has on the lives of thousands of Ontarians. I think that all of us in this Legislature know of family, friends, individuals in our community who have been challenged and affected by mental health issues. I think, frankly, the issue of stigma is to some degree—we're making progress in that respect. There's a greater degree of understanding in our communities now, given the fact that so many people are affected, perhaps one in five Canadians. We need to do more in terms of the health care system and in terms of our community response to support these families and these individuals and to help them work their way through their mental illnesses.

We know for sure, Mr. Speaker, that there are many very effective treatments for mental health illnesses. We have cognitive behavioural therapies that I think are very effective in many cases, and of course medication is part of the treatment of many people with mental illness. We've made great strides in that direction.

Obviously, we have much, much more to do. We know, as a PC caucus, that mental health is just as important as physical health. We need to treat it that way, and we need to understand it in those terms. Mental illness, as I said, affects Ontarians of every age and demographic. We know that services in many areas of the province and in many situations and circumstances remain inadequate.

Recently, the Health Quality Ontario organization released its annual report. That report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness—or education—have not improved in five years, and suicide rates have not improved in a decade. We need to do better for our vulnerable citizens. We need to work to combat the stigma, as I said earlier. Although I think we've made progress, we need to do more associated with mental health, start talking and provide greater access to treatment.

As I said earlier, the purpose of this bill is to come into compliance with the Ontario Court of Appeal decision that I referred to earlier. Currently, the Mental Health Act allows for repeated renewals of patients' involuntary status: one month after a first certificate of renewal, two months after a second certificate of renewal, and three months for a third or subsequent certificate of renewal. There is no mechanism for civilly detained patients to challenge the conditions of their treatment. The Ontario Court of Appeal ordered that the words “or subsequent” in section 20(4)(b)(iii) of the Mental Health Act be struck out. Technically, that was the ruling of the court, and that's what we have to respond to.

This bill creates a certificate of continuation, which is a new form capable of detaining a patient after the expiry of the third certificate of renewal. The certificate of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for a three-

month period, similar to the third certificate of renewal. Subsequent certificates of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for further three-month periods. When a patient is issued their first certificate of continuation, they are entitled to apply for a hearing with the Consent and Capacity Board—the CCB, as we sometimes call it—to confirm whether the prerequisites for involuntary status are met. This happens approximately at six and a half months.

I could go on and on about the details of the bill. I know that when the bill is passed at second reading—which I anticipate and expect it will be, because it seems to enjoy the support of the House—and goes to committee, I would hope that there will be an opportunity for some public hearings, at least. I realize the clock is ticking, but we have to give people an opportunity to have their say on this bill. We've talked about some of the situations recently where government bills were referred to committee and the initial suggestion of the government has been that they allow deputants as little as four minutes to make their presentations. Clearly, people need to have a greater opportunity than just four minutes to make a presentation to a standing committee of the Legislature to make recommendations for improvement and change.

I would also add that there's an interesting article that I read in *The Economist* magazine this morning, a fairly recent issue of *The Economist*. This is their October 24, 2015, issue. They actually do editorials at the front end of the magazine, Mr. Speaker. You may know; you may read it. It's a magazine that comes out of Great Britain. It is, I think, an authoritative source for news, but it's also a magazine that promotes the ideas of freer trade and greater liberty. They don't always advocate bigger government or higher government spending, but in this editorial they actually do when it comes to mental health.

They say that there is a case to be made for spending more money on mental health by government and by organizations in our communities, and particularly on research into mental health. They talk about the need to expend greater resources on research leading to better solutions. They make some good points that actually talk about not just the situation in Great Britain but worldwide, in particular the OECD.

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I'll read briefly from this editorial. They say: "Mental ill-health costs as much as 4% of GDP in lost productivity, disability benefits and health care bills, according to the OECD, a think tank. Many illnesses afflict the old disproportionately, but mental illness tends to strike the young, undermining productivity. In Sweden three fifths of new disability claims are for mental ill-health. Lives are cut short: seriously mentally ill people die 15 to 20 years younger than the rest of the population. And the economic burden seems to be growing heavier. A few years ago, the World Economic Forum estimated that in the two decades to 2030 the cumulative cost of mental illness could be \$16 trillion."

"Yet spending on research into these conditions is paltry. In most wealthy countries there is a big discrep-

ancy between mental health research spending and the total cost of mental illness."

Again, the editorial goes on to make the case for greater expenditure in terms of mental health research. I think that's something that all of us in this House need to ponder and consider in a time when, obviously, the government is still running a big deficit. It committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18, but, of course, we received the Financial Accountability Officer's report earlier this week, which called into question whether or not the government will be able to meet that commitment.

In that fiscal context, where money is tight, we still need to find ways to identify priorities and ensure that the priorities are adequately funded. I think that, certainly, based on the tenor and tone of this debate, there is strong support in this House, from all sides of the House, to ensure that mental health issues are adequately addressed. Again, I would suggest that we need to look into how we're expending money on research and see if we can find ways to stretch those dollars and do a better job.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I support this bill. I think it is going to receive the support of the House. We look forward to further debate and committee hearings as we try to get it right for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I was actually looking forward to getting up and being able to contribute to this debate for a little bit more time, but nevertheless, I will happily take these two minutes to weigh in.

One of the things that's been talked about extensively in this debate is the fact that this is a missed opportunity. This bill, needed as it is, is so focused and so specific that it's missing out on all the other challenges that we have when it comes to accessing mental health services in Ontario.

Specifically, what I wanted to talk about is the deficit that actually occurs in the northwest. We have many structural challenges that serve as an impediment to us having a healthy society. I just wanted to draw a picture of what happens and how people can access mental health services in the northwest. It is not uncommon for people in small towns in northwestern Ontario to have access to a psychiatrist who comes to our town once a month. That is, once a month, everybody in that town, if you are lucky, gets to see that psychiatrist for maybe the one or two days they are there. Otherwise, they have to travel 200 kilometres. Some members have talked about the challenge that exists with travelling 20 kilometres. That is a challenge, I'm not denying that, but imagine travelling 200 kilometres.

And then, the other thing that we're not talking about, too, is the very real and tragic situation that we have among our First Nations youth and the tragic level of youth suicides that are literally an epidemic sweeping through our communities, something that we all know about, something that is incumbent upon us to get together and figure out the solutions to and fix this so that we don't see our children and our future being lost. I just

can't stress that enough. This is a terrible missed opportunity. We need to do so much more.

While I applaud the government for finally getting together and taking action on this, we need to expand our scope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure to get up today to be able to add a few comments to today's debate. As members in this House know, I have been a nurse for all of my career. Indeed, I have been able to care for many folks with mental health issues throughout my career, both as an emergency and intensive care unit nurse, but also as a care coordinator working in health care and home care, and trying to assist those with mental health issues.

I am very much in support of Bill 122, the amendments to the Mental Health Act. I think that my number one priority continues to be the protection and safety of all Ontarians, but including those who suffer from mental health issues. Certainly, these amendments would, if passed, ensure that the Mental Health Act aligns with the charter, and at the same time enhance the rights of involuntary, long-term patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities.

I just wanted to say that there's no question that mental health and addictions is a very significant and complex issue that cuts across multiple areas of society and touches the lives of many people. Indeed, work that I've done in trying to find adequate housing for someone who's suffering from mental health illness and looking for those supports has been challenging because of the range of complex issues. You need to be able to balance the needs and the rights of that person who's afflicted with a mental health illness with the safety of the workers and the public, when those people are in the community.

Looking at supportive housing, to be able to move people from the psychiatric facilities into homes, is the best-case scenario. We do need to address that in the future.

I think that this bill will go a long way in being able to review each individual's case regularly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to commend the member from Wellington–Halton Hills on his comments and his very concise erudition of this bill, the iteration of it.

Our caucus supports this bill at second reading. We want to see some improvements to it, of course. We recognize the devastating effects of mental illness and the attached stigma that it has placed on many Ontarians. Mental health is just as important as physical health, and we need to treat it that way, and we need to put those types of resources towards it.

Just last week, Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital readmission rates for patients suffering from mental illness or addiction have not improved in the last five years, and suicide rates have not improved in over a decade. We

need to do better, and we must do better, for the most vulnerable.

The Ontario mental health day: The Ontario PC Party stands in solidarity with those Ontarians and Canadians directly and indirectly affected by mental illness, and their families. As Jeff Yurek said, the mental health day is an opportunity for Ontarians to learn and discuss mental health problems and understand that mental illness can affect anyone: "The Ontario PC Party believes that mental health is just as important as physical health. We need to treat it that way."

As the stats show, and as a number of speakers have already alluded to, for one in five Canadians—20%, Mr. Speaker—mental illness is the leading cause of disability in Canada, costing the economy, let alone those families, a great deal.

I think I read that the number \$51 billion is the estimate in Canada—\$1 billion a week, indirectly or directly, because of mental illness. The lost productivity is expected to be somewhere in the range of \$5.5 billion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I certainly am pleased to rise on Bill 122. I'm pleased to see that the health minister is here today, because I want to talk to him again—really plead with him, actually, to get involved with CarePartners and the nurses in the seven months they've been on the picket line.

They deal with mental health every day. That means the residents in Niagara, because they serve the entire area of Niagara, not just St. Catharines, under Mr. Bradley, the MPP for St. Catharines. They do the whole area. I'm asking the minister to please take a serious look at this issue and get them back to work. Get our nurses back to work so the residents in Niagara aren't being underserviced, including in mental health.

The mental health file that nobody has really talked about this morning is that what we've seen is young people having mental health issues, and how we have to be educated around that. I think even the Minister of Health will probably even realize this: It seems that we're having a lot more of our young people, young people in our schools—mostly in high school, but some in university—taking their own lives. We're not seeing the warning signs.

I said earlier in my speech very clearly, we have lots of talent in this room. With have a doctor in the room and we have nurses in the room—our member is a nurse. We have nurses over here. Let's sit down collectively and do our jobs together, find a solution to the mental health issue and make sure resources are going to mental health.

I already said—the doctor wasn't here at time; the Minister of Health wasn't here at time—that they closed beds in my riding in Niagara Falls, where most of the people who are suffering mental health issues live in poverty. They don't have cars. They don't have ways to go 20 minutes down the road. That makes absolutely no sense. We're using our police officers to take people with mental health issues into communities, and then that area

is underserviced. I plead to you: Please take a look at CarePartners.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to members who responded to my brief remarks this morning.

I return to the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which initiated its work more than five years ago. It was a process that was initiated, really, by our former colleague Christine Elliott, who served with distinction for many years in the Legislature. It became an issue that the government was prepared to respond to in terms of the establishment of a select committee to look at this important issue.

It was a remarkable example of all-party co-operation, I would say—I know the member for St. Catharines would agree—where members set their partisan differences at the door and worked very hard for, I think, 18 months, to listen to people and to develop comprehensive and thoughtful recommendations as to what needed to be done with respect to responding to mental health issues and addictions issues.

The report is still obviously current, in my view, even though the work commenced five years ago and the report was issued three and a half years ago or thereabouts—maybe four years ago. I think the government needs to respond to these recommendations. I think the government would tell us that they are responding to the recommendations and implementing some of the recommendations as policy, bit by bit. But, surely, we can get moving on this, given the fact there was such strong all-party consensus that found its way into the committee process.

I would commend the other members of the committee who worked so diligently for those 18 months: You, Mr. Speaker, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, were on that committee; I see the member for Nickel Belt; the member for Dufferin–Caledon played a very active role; the member for Guelph, who is now the Minister of Education, was involved; Maria Van Bommel, the former member; the member for Peterborough, now the Minister of Agriculture and Food; and the current Minister of Community and Social Services, as well. They were members of this select committee.

I think we need to get behind these recommendations and get them implemented.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 am.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There may be a list of a lot of introductions, so I'm going to ask everyone to stay to our format to get it all in in time.

We'll now do introductions of guests.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee. I look forward to doing the official introductions later.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I had the privilege of introducing Kyle Preuss's father here yesterday, Brian. Today, I have the privilege of introducing his mother, Mrs. Heather McCoy. Welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have a good friend here today. Steve Apostolopoulos is the managing partner of Triple Group of Companies, and they're the company behind the major tourism destination in Pickering known as Durham Live. He is here in the east gallery. Welcome.

I'd like to introduce some children as well, a group of grade 5 students from my riding. They're coming in from Cardinal Léger Catholic elementary school, and I look forward to seeing them in the House today.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce the man who takes care of this smile, Dr. Larry Hoffman, and the woman who puts a smile on his face, Carol Hoffman; their nephew Russell, and his children, Jake and Samantha.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome the grandparents of page captain Marco Di Laudo, Ron and Marlene Regher, who are here today to take part in today's proceedings. Thank you.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have the pleasure of having two introductions this morning. The page captain today is Symrin Flora, York West legislative page, from our local Gulfstream Public School, and her father is here with us today, Charanjit Flora. I want to welcome them, and I want to thank Symrin for the service that she does in this House. I hope that she will enjoy her stay here.

The second introduction, Speaker—and if you wonder about the weather, I have to say it comes from the wonderful island of Sicily. We have a delegation composed of the mayor of Vita—a wonderful dottoressa—doctor—Ms. Fina Galifi, and her husband, Giuseppe Mezzapelle. They are here in the audience. With the delegation we have Dominic Renda, the president of ATEM; Mr. Vince Abate, past president; Maria Abate; Sam Curia; and Enza Curia. I want to welcome them and thank them for the wonderful weather they brought from Sicily.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome James McIntosh, CEO of the Duxbury Cider Co., and Bryan Watts, VP of marketing for the Thornbury Beverage Co.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to welcome the federal candidate in the riding of Simcoe North, Liz Riley, and thank her for all the hard work she does in her riding.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to welcome to the Legislature this morning Kathleen Millar and Daniel Millar, who are the parents of our fine page from Wellington–Halton Hills, John Millar.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of the member from Thornhill, I'd like to welcome the mother of page Nicole Haim, here this morning: Karine Benzacar. She is in the members' gallery, joining us this morning.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce three members of the Niagara Injured Workers: Julia Lucas, Chester Marczewski and Willy Noiles.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Just making their way into the gallery in a few minutes, I believe, are the children from the grade 5 class at St. Clement Catholic School. I wanted to welcome them here to the Legislature.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of the member from Oxford, I'd like to introduce the mother of page Abby Moreside, Kathy Moreside, and also her aunt, Theresa Moreside. They will be in the members' gallery joining us this morning.

Mme France Gélinas: They are making their way into the chamber, but Dr. Keith Klassen and Dr. Ed Bassis are both from Sudbury, and they offer rehab psychology. They are here to talk about the poor treatment of WSIB for their clients.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park a constituent of mine, Matthew Farwell, and his friend Alexander Horn from Toronto. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Further to my earlier introduction, I just wanted to welcome—they're coming into the gallery now—the children from St. Clement Catholic School, teachers Giovanna Di Tomaso and Jaclyn Cashley, and their chaperone, Kira Houchen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members please join me in welcoming a group of women parliamentarians from across Canada who, along with Ontario's CWP representative, the member from Huron-Bruce, Lisa Thompson, are attending the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians' outreach session in Toronto.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery are Patricia Arab from Nova Scotia, Julie Boulet from Quebec, Lisa Harris from New Brunswick, Debbie Jabbour from Alberta, Martina Mundy from Prince Edward Island, Laura Ross from Saskatchewan and Jackie Tegart from British Columbia. They are accompanied by Elizabeth Kingston, the CWP executive secretary.

Welcome, ladies. We're glad you're here with us.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members will be aware that there appear on today's Orders and Notices paper two notices of opposition days to be debated in the week following the constituency week. Under standing order 43(c), the Speaker is required to select one of these notices for consideration. I'd like to advise the members that the motion by Ms. Horwath is the one that will be selected for debate on Wednesday, November 18.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no. I thought ours was better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't worry. We know how to make it balanced.

REMEMBRANCE DAY JOUR DU SOUVENIR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now receive a point of order from the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to mark Remembrance Day, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice, and we now know what that notice is. Do we agree to the motion? Agreed? Agreed.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

November 11 is Remembrance Day. Tributes are offered throughout the country and in this chamber. We recognize veterans' sacrifices.

We talk about defending freedom, and those are noble ideals, but on another level, sometimes I think we forget to ask ourselves the very important question: What did their sacrifices actually mean in terms of the individuals, their families and their friends?

I think there is an obligation on us to try to understand their sacrifice in these very personal ways: what it meant to them, what it meant in their minds and what it meant in their hearts. I think we have an obligation to try and feel the pain and the grief of their mothers, their fathers, their siblings and their friends.

Speaker, it is impossible to comprehend, in the safety of our homes, in the safety of our careers, in the safety of this chamber, exactly what that meant. How are we to understand what it must have felt like to be shot at and bombed, to suffer grievous wounds, to die from grievous wounds or to be maimed? But this is the visceral reality of what it is like to serve in defence of these noble virtues of democracy and freedom.

1040

All of their names are chiseled on the various cenotaphs throughout the province of Ontario: in small-town Ontario, villages, big cities, rural communities and high school remembrance plaques, all over the province. But how many of us, Speaker, passing a cenotaph, passing one of these high school plaques, take a moment to pause and just look at the names on those plaques and ask ourselves: "What did it mean to them and their families at the very personal level?"

I think that our obligation on this Remembrance Day is to try to feel that reality, that danger, that fear. Each of those individuals faced horror, fear, danger, and then all of those emotions must have also been felt by their parents, their siblings and their friends. Our obligation is to understand the magnitude of their risk and their sacrifices, and to respect them for that.

Let me tell you a very human story to drive this point home. Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg, Manitoba was invited by the Canadian government to the national Vimy monument unveiling in the late 1920s. There's a picture of her in a magazine of the day that covered it. She is standing there quietly, saluting in a very frail, dignified, but brave manner.

This is what the caption under the photograph says: "Among the Canadian pilgrims who attended the un-

veiling of the Vimy ... memorial was Silver Cross Mother Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg, who lost eight sons in the war." That day she wore all their medals on her jacket. Just let that thought sink in: a mother, a father, a family—eight sons.

I did a little bit of research into the background of Mrs. Woods. She had 12 children, 11 sons, all of whom enlisted; two were underage, and eight never came home. Need I say more? I think we have an obligation to ask ourselves how we comprehend that sacrifice of her sons, and of her mother and of her siblings. How do we honour it? How do we remember it? That's our challenge. That's our responsibility on this day of remembrance.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: My dad was a navy veteran. He couldn't swim. His ship was torpedoed twice. He was a brave man. "Son," he used to say to me, "you haven't paid your debt to the past until you have left a future indebted to yourself." It's during times like this, where as a grateful nation and province we acknowledge the debt paid on our behalf by the brave men and women who fought for our future, that my father's words echo within my conscience.

I am reminded—as I know we all are—that it is our duty to gather together, heads bowed, in sombre and solemn remembrance, to honour the sacrifices Canadian soldiers have made in the two great wars, in Korea, in Afghanistan and in numerous peacekeeping missions.

As the sound of the Last Post touches our ears, and the familiar words of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's memorial poem In Flanders Fields once again touch our hearts, our thoughts are filled with sorrow for those lost on foreign battlefields, be it on the land, in the air or at sea.

The contributions Canadians have made in these historic conflicts solidified our reputation as a nation that doesn't go looking for fights, but will not shirk from them. Those who answered the call to serve defined our Canada, known across the globe as a strong, peaceful and multicultural country. Our Canada, that stands tall as a free nation: Let us never forget that that is a privilege earned by the soldier and donated to us all.

It is our duty to remember how they died and the sacrifices they made, but it is equally important to remember how they lived: with duty, selflessness and honour.

At this time of remembrance, let's us also reflect on those who came home, our glorious veterans. Let us pay tribute to how they went on living and the values they represented, values forged in the despair of war, learned on battlefields and brought home to build this great province and this great country.

Reflecting on how they lived is truly the essence of Remembrance Day, because it is our duty to celebrate rich lives lost or forever changed in the defence of freedoms and the ideals we cherish. There simply is no greater sacrifice. They believed in a cause worth fighting for. They believed in a greater good and that their endeavours, rife with great peril, had a purpose for future generations. What a great lesson for us all who have been granted the privilege to live in this great country.

To make lives better for future generations, we must always stand strong and united in the face of adversity and emulate the hard-won values our soldiers forged for us to follow. We are indeed indebted to those who served, both living and dead, and it is our duty, as Lieutenant Colonel McCrae reminds us: "To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high."

Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the upcoming observance of Remembrance Day. Wednesday marks the armistice that arrived at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month. Remembrance Day is a time to mourn, but it's also a time to celebrate the proud military traditions of our great country. Canada has always answered the call to stand up for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Ninety-seven years ago, the First World War ended. Le Canada a toujours répondu à l'appel pour défendre la liberté, la démocratie, les droits de l'homme et la règle du droit. Il y a 97 ans, la Première Guerre mondiale a pris fin.

On November 11, we remember all those who placed themselves in harm's way and all those who still risk themselves for the values of our great province and our country today. Regardless of their political allegiances or philosophical beliefs, Canadians all share a common admiration and deep respect for Canadian veterans. They are the tie that binds the citizens of our great country together.

On November 11, I'm always reminded, on a more personal level, of my great-uncle Frankie, who was the president of the Barrie Legion for years. As a child, he would take me to the Barrie Legion. My grandfather brought them to Simcoe county. They were trained at Base Borden. My uncle Frankie served overseas. He always told me that that Canadian flag means so much when you travel abroad. I remember once as a student going over to Holland and seeing that appreciation for the Canadian maple leaf. It really is an incredible honour, what so many of our veterans did in that moment that will never be forgotten in history.

Mr. Speaker, we think of all our brave men and women who never came home, all the grieving families, all the soldiers who have been wounded in body and spirit, something we all talk about all too seldom.

Monsieur le Président, nous pensons à tous les braves hommes et femmes qui ne sont jamais revenus, toutes les familles en peine, tous les soldats qui ont été blessés en corps et en esprit, quelque chose dont nous parlons trop rarement.

They paid the ultimate sacrifice, and that is why on Remembrance Day, in communities across Canada, thousands of families will stand before memorials and cenotaphs for those who made the ultimate sacrifice for Canada. With bravery and unwavering determination, our veterans have defended our home, our security and our

freedom. They stood up for our values in the face of grave danger, and we owe them a debt of endless gratitude, especially those currently serving overseas. The Canadian Forces continue to make a sacrifice that we can't even fathom.

I encourage young people to reach out to a veteran and learn their story and share it with your friends. Maybe write a letter to a member of the Canadian Forces who is posted overseas or to a local base commander, or spend time at a local retirement home with those who have lived through the experience of wartime—passer quelque temps à une maison de retraite locale avec ceux qui ont vécu l'expérience de la guerre.

Mr. Speaker, there are many honourable ways to thank the men and women who have served Canada in times of war for their incredible sacrifice. May we always remember the fallen who went far from home to answer the call of peace.

Lest we forget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On behalf of New Democrats, I'm honoured to rise to share a few remarks about next week's Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Next week, our nation observes Remembrance Day. As that happens, Canadians will be taking part in ceremonies at local war memorials, Legion halls, cenotaphs. Rain or shine, our country will come together to recognize the contributions and sacrifices that our veterans and all of our servicewomen and men have made in the defence of our country and in defence of our shared values and freedoms.

1050

Some of our veterans will march, others will be assisted by former comrades or family members, but as the clock reaches the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, they will all be at attention as the Last Post is played. As those familiar notes sound in all corners of our province and our country, we will all turn our minds back to a time that is barely imaginable for us today. This was a time when young women and men were sent to places that they had never heard of or even imagined—places that now stand in infamy with names that are seared into our national memory: Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Juno Beach, Ortona, Korea and, more recently, Afghanistan. There are peacekeeping missions as well, missions like Bosnia and Rwanda.

This was a time when young men and women, and sometimes children, left their families behind, abandoned their textbooks or postponed their careers, and went off to fight and often to die in the service of our country. When confronted with the enormity of what was demanded of these soldiers and the harrowing price that so many paid, the scale of their sacrifice is truly humbling. Often, the depictions of war and peacekeeping missions alike show images of acts of incredible courage. But what we don't see are the invisible scars—the psychological wounds that our veterans will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

War is not glamorous. It leaves behind great human devastation. Men, women and children are its victims. It

is our responsibility, each and every time we send servicemen and women into active duty, to support them every step of the way, especially when they return home. Our words in remembrance of our fallen soldiers and those who have returned home from the horrors of war are weak and empty if they are not accompanied by the will to ensure that their sacrifices are remembered through our actions and our deeds.

In the last stanza of the famous poem In Flanders Fields—which, in fact, celebrated its 100-year anniversary this year—John McCrae calls on the reader not to break faith with those who died, and he passes the torch to future generations to continue the struggle. This is the struggle to build a better world for our children and our grandchildren. It rests on all of us, all Canadians, not to break faith with that commitment.

Thanks to Canada's veterans, so many of us and our children will never have to live through the scourge of war. We owe them so very much. We can never actually repay that debt. We can only hope to be equal to their sacrifice, both in life and in death. On November 11, New Democrats commit ourselves to remembering—remembering those who have served in our past and remembering those who serve today. We honour them all. We will remember them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their heartfelt, sincere and supportive comments. I am going to take a step beyond the motion and request that we all stand for a moment's silence as a group together.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We will remember them.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: For the Acting Premier: Today's the day—the day the Liberals can't turn back from. They're going to give away an asset that produces \$700 million in revenue for the people of Ontario, all of which will amount to just two years of revenue from Hydro One. In the end, the Liberals will get as little as \$1.4 billion of new cash from the Hydro One sale, an amount that won't even cover the cost of one new, significant transit project.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Liberal government mortgaged Ontario's future for such a short-sighted and short-term gain?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate the question on this day. Indeed, Ontario is generating significant returns from broadening the ownership of Hydro One. We do remain on track to realize our budget target of \$9 billion from this, generated through the IPO. That's \$4 billion for infrastructure and \$5 billion for debt.

This move supports the single largest investment in transit and transportation infrastructure in the province's history. The IPO has now closed for Hydro One common shares and has begun trading today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: I'm surprised the Acting Premier demonstrates no remorse, no regret. I'm certain that will come later.

Nearly 80% of the people of Ontario oppose the sale. The FAO has confirmed that that 80% knows what we've said all along: This is a bad deal for Ontario. The sale will raise the cost of hydro and make life even more unaffordable for Ontario's residents.

I know that every member on the government side is sharing the same concerns from your constituents that we're hearing. They're scared of what this deal is going to mean for Ontario.

My question for the Acting Premier is this: Real leadership is recognizing when you've made a mistake, to correct course. After hearing everything, will you do the right thing? Will you reverse course and stop this bad deal for Ontario?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we start, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, come to order.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think real leadership means giving accurate information to the people of this province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you haven't caught the message, I'm going to be jumping on this. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite—in fact, the members opposite continue to perpetuate the inaccurate sense that hydro rates are somehow going to be impacted by broadening the ownership of Hydro One. That is absolutely false. The member opposite knows that the Ontario Energy Board regulates rates today and will regulate rates in the future. To make the link between this move and increasing rates is simply intended to frighten people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: You want to talk about accurate information? Read the Financial Accountability Officer's report on this disastrous sale of Hydro One. That report confirmed what we've been saying all along: that the government's mythical infrastructure plans from the proceeds of Hydro One won't amount to any new money for infrastructure. The infrastructure plan stood at \$130 billion for 10 years before the sale; now it's \$130 billion post sale. You're not putting any money into infrastructure.

At best, it's \$1.4 billion. With the 2015 budget, you've made no correction for infrastructure. So don't say it's about infrastructure when everyone sees that it's not.

As little as \$1.4 billion—you're mortgaging our future. It's not in the best interests of Ontario.

My question to the Acting Premier is: Hearing all the evidence, will you do the right thing finally and say, "Enough is enough. This is a bad deal for Ontario"?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is an absolutely ludicrous question. We have put in our budget the \$130 billion for infrastructure investment, and we have laid out a plan on how we're going to pay for that. Paying for the infrastructure includes maximizing the value of our assets. That's what we're doing because this province needs those investments in infrastructure. If you think you want to cancel those the way you cancelled the Eglinton Crosstown—I'll tell you, the people of Ontario are looking to leadership, looking to government to build the infrastructure that our economy needs and that our people need.

1100

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Acting Premier: I've always said that when the government acts in the best interests of Ontario, we'll be the first to applaud them. When the government committed \$1 billion to develop the economic potential of the Ring of Fire, I acknowledged that that was a great announcement. But what I'm concerned about is that there are no timelines for getting shovels in the ground. This Liberal promise appears like many before: It's all about election time and not about an actual implementation of that idea; it's about photo ops. And because this government is dithering, investors in the Ring of Fire, like Noront Resources, are left waiting.

Mr. Speaker, will this Liberal government today give Noront and the people of northern Ontario a firm timeline for its promised commitment to the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to that question. I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that Noront Resources made it very clear that they remain committed to the project, and we're working very closely with them. In fact, they announced that they are moving forward on an exploration project within the Ring of Fire area themselves.

As a government, we remain absolutely committed to the project. We have our commitment of \$1 billion for the transportation infrastructure corridor locked in, thanks to the Minister of Finance. We are looking forward to an opportunity to have a discussion with the new federal government to engage in the process that was not very successful in the past with the previous government.

We are engaged in a regional framework discussion with Matawa First Nations, and we have set up a

development corporation to move that forward. So we are indeed making very positive progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: The time for talk is over. It's time for action in the north. Northerners and investors are tired of this government's wait-and-see attitude toward the development of the Ring of Fire.

As noted in yesterday's National Post, this government's lack of action on its billion-dollar infrastructure promise to the Ring of Fire leaves investors worried and frustrated. Platitudes and photo ops don't get shovels in the ground; they don't get people working. Only a firm timeline for construction of a transportation corridor in the Ring of Fire will give investors the confidence they need.

Mr. Speaker, will the government do the right thing? Will they give us a timeline and give the people of northern Ontario the confidence that they're actually going to honour this election commitment?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I would certainly invite the leader of the official opposition and other members of his party to have a conversation with Mr. Coutts of Noront Resources, who is obviously very keen to move forward. We are all very keen to move the project forward, and within the last year and a half a number of significant measures have taken place. We had the historic, precedent-setting regional framework agreement signed with the Matawa First Nations, something that others will say we need to focus on, and indeed we do.

We recognize that in order for this project to move forward, it needs to be embraced by the First Nations and there needs to be an assurance that they will be seeing benefits from this major resource development project, a project that I think the Leader of the Opposition probably needs to be reminded is in a remote part of the province that has never seen development before. That's why our recognition that indeed we need to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —\$1-billion commitment was so crucial.

Mr. Speaker, we're working closely with the companies and First Nations, and looking forward to a much better—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Acting Premier: I'm tired of these excuses. It's been eight years since the Ring of Fire—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Please, finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it's been eight years to do nothing. It's been five years since the government created the Ring of Fire Secretariat, and we haven't

seen a shovel in the ground. In fact, the government can't even commit to a start date for the development.

What we've seen described as Ontario's own oil sands is estimated to create a \$9.4-billion economic boom for all of Ontario at the least—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's start the clock.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I guess we've hit a nerve with their record of all talk and no action. The reality is that they've spent eight years blaming other people: blaming the federal government, blaming previous governments. There is no one for you to blame now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The reality is, these are thousands and thousands of dollars—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'd already said "answer."

Minister.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I truly do not mean to be impolite, but I do think the Leader of the Opposition is betraying a true lack of understanding of how the mining process works in the province. This is a project that, again I will remind him, is a huge resource development opportunity; yes, a remarkable opportunity in a remote part of the province that requires us, for all the right reasons, to work very, very closely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville—second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The progress and the commitments that we made related to this major resource development project are unprecedented. The work that we're doing with the Matawa First Nations, the regional framework agreement, you would acknowledge is an important part of the process. We're going to continue to work closely with them relating to regional infrastructure, resource revenue-sharing—all of those aspects that are so important to ensure the First Nations do better. Our \$1-billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a minute.

Two things are happening here that I suspect are rather frustrating for the majority. We've got comments going back and forth that raise the ire of each side, and then individuals decide that they can jump in and make comments that are not what we consider here to be appropriate in terms of names and elevating the debate, and the heat of the debate. All of the other processes that are in place are rational. They make sense. You address the Chair in your question and you address the Chair in your answer. It helps to lower the temperature, not raise it.

Whether or not anyone wants to make a comment about what I'm saying, if they say it, I'll let you go.

Let's just finish with a wrap-up, please, and we'll move on to the next question.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Our \$1-billion, locked-in commitment to the transportation infrastructure is extraordinarily significant, and we look forward to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. On Tuesday, the Acting Premier told this House, "We are looking at other assets." Is the Liberal government going to sell more revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's appropriate for us to look at all of the opportunities that are available to the province of Ontario to create opportunities and to seize upon them. At this point in time, we made it clear in our budget that we are looking at our real estate and a number of our agencies. We determined that Hydro One was one of those organizations that could be improved upon. Hence, we've taken the steps necessary to broaden its ownership and make it a much more effective customer service organization, for the benefit of all Ontarians, and to get to reinvest some of that money into new projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals like to tell a story about how they campaigned on selling Hydro One. Of course, selling off Hydro One wasn't anywhere in their platform. Instead, they talked about asset optimization, and then they act shocked that Ontarians didn't think it was obvious that this actually meant selling off Hydro One.

On Tuesday, the Acting Premier told this House, "We are looking at other assets." I'm hoping that the Acting Premier can clarify exactly what she meant this time for the people of Ontario. Is "looking at other assets" Liberal code for putting even more revenue-generating assets on the auction block in the future?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I remind the member opposite that we put in our budget a paragraph around asset optimization. Our plan was clearly stated in our 2014 budget and in our election platform, and it was supported, ultimately, by a majority mandate. In it, we talk about our four-pillar economic plan, including unlocking the value of our assets to optimize the necessity to enable us to reinvest money to make even more opportunity for the province of Ontario by investing it in the Trillium Trust.

The NDP made a claim that they would have done exactly the same thing. They did that in their nine-page platform. They talked about how they were going to make the cuts necessary to balance the books and they were going to invest all this money with the very same assumption that we made in ours. The member opposite actually talked about it during that election campaign, and it's no secret.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The bottom line is that the Premier did not run on selling off Hydro One, but here we are. The Premier didn't run on selling other revenue-generating assets, but earlier this week the Deputy Premier, the second most senior minister in the Liberal government, said that more public assets could be going on the auction block. Maybe that's our nuclear reactors and the rest of the OPG; maybe that's the LCBO; it could be the OLG. These assets bring in significant revenues which help us invest in health care, education, transit, poverty reduction, our environment—you name it.

Will the Liberals do the right thing, stop any further sale of Hydro One and commit that they will not sell off any more of our revenue-generating assets here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The government will do the right thing. We will do everything necessary to maximize the potential of our assets, ensure that we create greater value for the consumers, ratepayers and taxpayers, and ensure that we reinvest it into new assets to make more opportunity so that we can reinvest and create a more competitive province.

The member opposite recognizes that assets were identified in the budget very clearly; we named them. We actually said what assets we were looking at, and we ultimately saw a greater opportunity to maximize value for Hydro One, a component of the electricity system that is in a competitive environment with others. It's trading today, and I look forward to the market reaction as we proceed forward.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Hydro One shares are trading on the TSX today, and it's funny, because I don't recall the Premier running on a plan to sell off Hydro One. Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that selling Hydro One will mean Ontario's financial situation will be "worse than it would have been without the sale."

Will this government do the right thing, come to its senses and hit the brakes on selling off any more of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we need to remind ourselves why we are doing this. We're doing it so we can build the transit, the transportation, the schools, the highways that this province needs.

The member opposite might think we can do that without taking any action, but the reality is that we need to pay for that infrastructure. Broadening the ownership of Hydro One allows us to make those infrastructure investments now, when they are needed.

There are experts who have argued that we're actually not spending enough on infrastructure. We need to create those jobs, we need to keep up with population growth,

we need to maintain the infrastructure we have. Experts have called for us to increase our infrastructure investment up to 5% of our GDP, up from 3.5%. Broadening the ownership of Hydro One helps us get there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Financial Accountability Officer, an independent officer of this Legislature, told this government that the sell-off of Hydro One is the absolute worst way to fund infrastructure investments. The Liberal government made the wrong decision when it chose to sell off a part of Hydro One. Now the first block of shares have been sold on the markets, but it is not too late to stop the next block of shares from going to market. Selling 15% is bad, but selling 60% is a disaster. Will the Liberals listen to the facts put forward by the FAO, come to their senses and stop the further selling off of Hydro One?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Instead of putting words in the mouth of the Financial Accountability Officer, let me read what he actually wrote in his report, which I have read. On page 9, he says, "This report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One...." Let me repeat that: "This report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision to sell Hydro One...."

He goes on to say that there are conditions around his report. The fact is that he looked at one part of this decision. He did not look at the benefits of actually investing in infrastructure.

We're talking about 110,000 jobs to build the infrastructure that we need. Now is the time to build infrastructure, and we have to use the resources we have, to be able to do that now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As a public asset, Hydro One had 13 million owners. Today, that ownership is getting smaller. The government isn't broadening ownership. It's handing the ownership to a small group of private shareholders.

These are the facts: The FAO report proved that this will mean less money in the long term for transit and other services; 185 municipalities, and counting, have told the Premier to keep Hydro public; the Premier shut First Nations out of the process; and eight out of 10 Ontarians want to keep Hydro One public.

Will the Liberals hit the brakes before even more of Hydro One ends up helping the Premier's powerful friends instead of helping Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member's question underlines her lack of understanding of what this deal is. Ontarians, all 13.5 million of us, still own 85% of Hydro One. When this is complete, we will still be able to make the big decisions that are important to the public interest. We are protecting the public interest as we generate the revenue that is necessary to build infrastructure.

Speaker, more people own Hydro One today than did this morning because we are broadening the ownership. But rest assured, every person in this province will continue to have significant ownership in Hydro One.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. When De Beers was well under way building Ontario's only diamond mine, the Liberal government introduced a diamond royalty. This new tax shocked the owners of the Victor mine, as they had already spent over \$1 billion in development. They were literally in too deep to cancel their project.

Last year, Cliffs Natural Resources, one of the senior mining companies exploring in the Ring of Fire, did cancel their project. In fact, not only did they sell off their Ring of Fire property; they actually left Ontario.

Speaker, I ask the minister, did the Liberal government ever propose a chromite royalty? Is that why Cliffs left Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. I thank the member for the question. The reality is, of course, that we have an extraordinarily positive working relationship with De Beers. One of the great opportunities we have in the province was the Victor diamond mine, which opened up in 2008. I know that De Beers has continued to look at how they can operate it and find another extension of their property, so that's going to be good news in the future, and we're going to keep working with them.

As for the work that we're doing right now on the Ring of Fire, the member knows well—and it would be certainly helpful if, rather than always trying to talk down the great economic opportunity we have in the Ring of Fire, they worked with us to support the work that we're doing, which includes the work that Noront Resources is doing and includes the extraordinarily real effort we're making with the First Nations to bring everyone together so we can see real partnership on this great resource development opportunity for all of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the minister: It's interesting that he avoided the answer about the chromite tax. But also, an interesting by-product of the gas plants scandal hearings were the documents the government had to release.

Here's page 2,156 under the heading "Confidential—Commercially Sensitive Material."

The section on Cliffs reads: "The province created the chromite royalty.

"Expected revenues from the new chromite royalty, which was created for this Ring of Fire project ... range from \$6.6 million to \$34.4 million per year."

1120

A major mining discovery is made, and the very first thing this Liberal government thought of was, "How can

we tax them more?" Well, they taxed them right out of Ontario. Speaker, will the minister now admit that their failed policies and new tax meant that thousands of people aren't working in the Ring of Fire today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

Interjection: Oh, seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yeah, right.

Answer, please.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: One thing that we've been very clear about—and I think it's shared by everyone who wants to see this project move forward—is that it's absolutely vital that we do this right. That is why we have engaged so closely, obviously, with industry to make sure that they are partners with us in moving forward on the project.

The member knows full well that in many ways the markets will also be a very real factor in terms of making that decision. We are actually in an era of very difficult commodity pricing as well. But that doesn't change the fact that this extraordinary \$60-billion deposit—obviously, chromite being one of the exciting metals that's up there—is going to move forward.

But we need to make sure that we do it right. Again, I'm sure that everyone would agree that one of the things we need to do is to work with the communities most directly impacted by this potential development, communities that have never seen any resource development before, which is why we are working so closely on the regional framework agreement and the regional process. That's the work to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Today we're joined by a number of doctors who have come to Queen's Park to support injured workers and a report called Prescription Over-Ruled, which highlights that the WSIB is intentionally and systemically ignoring the advice of medical professionals. They're here today to question WSIB practices and policies that are a systemic interference with the claims of injured workers.

Will the minister launch an investigation immediately into WSIB practices for injured workers' claims?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I thank the honourable member for the question—a very, very important question, something we take very, very seriously. I am aware that the report was released this morning. I have a copy of it myself. I think my staff are meeting with the authors of the report, as well as some of the people associated with the report, as we speak. I continue to meet with injured workers.

I want to thank the OFL for this report, because we know it's critical for people who suffer from injuries to

receive the help they need in a timely manner, as quickly as possible. I think we've been able to, for the most part, address the issues that are physical in nature. What the report today is outlining—the allegations that are being made—is that often there's a psychological connection to that. I think we as a society, this House, this government, previous governments and institutions are starting to come to grips with the importance of the psychological aspect of this.

I look forward to examining this report, Speaker, and making sure that I understand it properly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Unfortunately, "timely" means three to five years in Ontario.

Speaker, these WSIB denials are now the subject of a whistle-blower report by the OFL and Ontario injured workers. The doctors are here today to sound the alarm bells and to ensure that necessary steps are taken by the WSIB to stop the re-victimization of injured workers. It's unconscionable where medical advice of doctors and clinical psychologists is being ignored so that the WSIB can ensure that their claims numbers look good. To be clear, the WSIB is re-victimizing the very workers that it was mandated to help.

Will the minister commit to reviewing the report recommendations, to launching an investigation and to ensuring that the WSIB accepts the independent professional opinions of Ontario's medical experts?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again to the member for that question. I thought I was clear the first time around; that, absolutely, I will review this report. Every member of this House should review this report. It's a report that's being brought forward by an organization that I think a lot of people look to to receive advice when it comes to how things can impact upon working people in the province of Ontario. It's a report we take very, very seriously.

Whether an inquiry should come as a result of that, Speaker, I think would be pre-judging what is in the report. But I can tell you that I go out of my way to meet with injured workers in this province. I connect with the OFL. I don't always agree with the OFL, but they understand that; we have an open-door policy.

I look forward to receiving the information that's in this report and doing the best thing so that injured workers in this province receive the care and the health care that they deserve.

CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE

CLIMATE CHANGE

M. John Fraser: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique.

Comme de nombreux Ontariens, les membres de ma communauté sont préoccupés par le changement climatique et par la pollution de gaz à effet de serre. Ils s'inquiètent de la condition du monde dans lequel nos enfants et nos

petits-enfants vont grandir si nous ne prenons pas une action forte sur le changement climatique.

Due to a lack of leadership from the previous federal government in this critical challenge, other levels of government in Canada have had to step up to fill this void. More specifically, there has been an unprecedented level of co-operation and collaboration between our government and the government of Quebec.

Can the minister please advise on the status of the co-operation that came out of the joint cabinet meeting in September?

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Merci à mon collègue d'Ottawa-Sud. Nous travaillons très fort avec le Québec, un partenariat très important pour nous—probablement la plus importante relation dans la fédération pour nous autres. C'est très important parce que nous avons la même économie. L'économie du Québec et l'économie de l'Ontario, ce sont les mêmes affaires, les mêmes secteurs, les mêmes régions bio: le forêt boréale, le fleuve Saint-Laurent, les Grands Lacs. L'impact du changement climatique sur les Québécois et Québécoises est le même que sur les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Pendant le Cabinet conjoint, nous avons établi ensemble et nous avons discuté notre cible pour 2030. C'est une petite compétition: nous avons une cible de 37 % moins d'émissions qu'en 1990, et le Québec, maintenant, a 37,5 %—

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

Mr. John Fraser: Encore une fois, ma question est pour le ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique.

Le ministre a souligné dans sa réponse qu'un aspect essentiel pour avancer sur la lutte contre le changement climatique est l'augmentation de la sensibilisation du public.

I know the minister has been very active in bringing attention to the challenge of climate change and the need for collaboration among all levels of government. With any issue, proper awareness of the challenge is as key as the solution. Climate change is no different.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House on the public awareness component of the MOU and what is being done to raise awareness of this important challenge?

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Le projet de communication est très important parce que c'est un grand défi. Le marché du carbone est très compliqué. Le Québec est plus en avance que nous parce qu'il y a un échange qui a été établi quelques années passées. Mais nous travaillons, en français et en anglais, pour engager nos citoyens et pour faire des communications conjointes. Mais, aussi, c'est très important parce que l'Ontario a fermé les usines de charbon, et maintenant, nous avons le même défi que le Québec. C'est que dans les secteurs d'immeubles et de transportation, c'est plus de 50 % des émissions de gaz à effet de serre ici et au Québec. Alors, ce partenariat est plus important maintenant parce que nous avons maintenant le même défi.

Merci au membre, parce que la collaboration dans notre système fédéral est très importante.

LAYOFFS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Kraft Heinz plant in St. Marys has been a major employer in that community for decades, but yesterday afternoon, we learned the company will close its doors. For the 214 employees who will lose their jobs, this news is absolutely devastating.

My question is this: What will the government do to help them and the people of St. Marys in the days ahead?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This was indeed very disappointing news that came out of St. Marys yesterday. As the member opposite knows, St. Marys is very close to my home in London, and I expect that many of the people who were laid off are in fact constituents of mine. Our first concern is for these workers, for their families affected by the layoffs.

1130

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will be providing training programs to help support workers through these very difficult times. We are monitoring the situation. We will continue working with other levels of government to ensure coordinated service.

I tell you, Speaker, we in the southwest know too well that it is very difficult for communities when things like this happen, and we must be there to support those workers as they transition to jobs of the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, we appreciate the Deputy Premier's interest and sympathy, but there are a few things we need even more. First, we need an immediate commitment to open an action centre in St. Marys to help the affected employees. That's what the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has done in similar situations.

Second, we need the government to work cooperatively with the town to attract and retain new employers for the area.

Third, we desperately need an effective manufacturing strategy to restore Ontario's competitiveness and restore hope for those in the sector.

When will the government do these things?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member for bringing this question forward. When something like this happens, our hearts go out to the hard-working employees who have been working very hard. They're committed to supporting not only their families, but also supporting our economy.

When something like this happens, when layoffs happen, my ministry acts very quickly, through rapid re-employment and training services. In this particular case, again, my ministry—the office manager at the St. Marys plant was informed about the possibilities, and also the facilities which the ministry offers to laid-off workers. We will continue to support the laid-off workers at the St. Marys plant.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Two days ago, the government announced a 30-year deal with a private consortium to maintain the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. The value of the privatized maintenance deal is \$3.8 billion, almost as much as the cost of building the line itself.

Even though Infrastructure Ontario released several self-promoting press releases on Tuesday, it still refuses to release details that would explain exactly how much control over transit the government has handed over to the private sector for the next three decades.

The private bidders have had this information for almost two years. Why is the minister keeping it from the public?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Parkdale—High Park for the question. It always delights me to have the opportunity to talk about how transformational the Eglinton Crosstown project will be: 19 kilometres of LRT, 25 stops connecting Weston all the way to Scarborough here in the GTHA. It's a fantastic project.

In fact, what the member opposite is referring to is that just a couple of days ago, this government—through Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx, partnering with the successful project consortium for this landmark infrastructure project, a consortium known as Crosslinx—announced publicly \$9.1 billion for a 30-year contract to design, build, finance and maintain. That is a project that came in at \$2 billion less than originally anticipated by this government.

That speaks exactly to why it's so important for us to continue to leverage the innovation and creativity of the private sector. I look forward to having a chance to follow up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We have asked the government for the full RFP document for the Eglinton Crosstown that was given to private bidders almost two years ago. The government won't release it.

We asked for documents concerning the government's plans a few years ago to fully privatize the Eglinton Crosstown. All we got back was 2,500 blank pages.

The private corporations controlling the Eglinton Crosstown will need to work with the TTC and the city of Toronto to ensure the new LRT interacts properly with local transit. We have no idea how this will even work.

When will the minister finally release all the documents showing what control over transit he has given away to private interests?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the supplementary question. I find it curious, Speaker. Not that many months ago here in this Legislature, this exact same member, on this exact same topic, stood in the House and asked me a question about the Eglinton Crosstown. In her question that day, she suggested that because there were only two bidders for this particular project, inevitably the taxpayers would pay more because there wasn't enough competition.

As I mentioned in my original answer, just earlier this week we were able to go out and say that the Crosslinx project team has now—we've done the financial close—a 30-year contract to design, build, finance and maintain this, at a cost that is \$2 billion less than was originally anticipated, contrary to what that member and the NDP caucus seem to believe in their fictional world when it comes to not building infrastructure in their case. Instead, we are getting the job done.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Finance. Today, the crown jewel of Ontario's electricity system is on the market, but if you believe the Premier's man behind the curtain, Mr. Speaker, the company stopped being 100% publicly owned last week. In an interview he gave to BNN, Ed Clark bragged about Hydro One being the "perfect flavour" for the market and said, "We got the big players that we wanted," confirming what we've long said on this side of the House: that the Hydro One sale is just a way for Liberals to give a big payout to their well-heeled friends. They don't even care about the \$500-million hole in their plan to balance the budget.

Speaker, is the Minister of Finance really content to keep up the Wizard of Oz routine here in the House while the man behind the curtain sells off Hydro One for the Premier?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting question. I appreciate the theatrics, but I think what's really important here is the result of this transaction. Today, the market will give you exactly the result of what we are doing.

Mr. Clark—I give him a lot of credit for enabling the ability to do a transaction at a much lower cost than has otherwise been done in the past.

I also recognize that the work that is being done is only a staged approach that's being taken very carefully to mitigate the risks of what happened in the previous transaction done by the opposition. The member opposite may recall that they hid a deficit of \$5.6 billion and still they sold one of our precious assets, and gave us the "0" in 407, Mr. Speaker. We are not allowing that to happen. We are going to reinvest it dollar for dollar in our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, he's fine playing the Wizard of Oz, apparently.

Smokey Thomas has told committee that every single Liberal MPP that he has talked to is against the sale of Hydro One.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Mr. Todd Smith: Every single backbencher over there is against the sale of Hydro One privately, but they're all taking their instructions from the corner office.

The FAO pointed out last week that it's a bad deal for Ontarians. He pointed out that it's simply holding onto Hydro One for a couple of years and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, every member on that side, I think, is supportive because they wanted to sell off 100%. They put it in some of their platforms.

Let me take this opportunity now to state the following: I'm pleased to see that it is being well received in the marketplace. Every uptick on the mark is an indication that the future offerings will net even greater proceeds benefiting all Ontarians. It will mean, Mr. Speaker, billions of dollars being reinvested into our economy, into building new assets, into producing greater revenues, for the net benefit for all of us concerned, at the same time transforming this corporation to be a better performer for the consumer and for the customer.

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All we're doing is maximizing its potential, seizing on that opportunity and enabling all of us to continue owning a better proportion and amount of Hydro One and future assets.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, we attended Meet the Miners Day, and you boasted your government's commitment to mining in Ontario.

Last year, mining giant Cliffs, who spent \$550 million in the Ring of Fire, said they can no longer do business with this Liberal government and sold their claims at a massive loss to Noront for \$20 million. Cliffs said they had "zero hope" for the Ring of Fire, that the project was "beyond the point of no return" and that every investment made here was a "disaster".

Sources inside Noront have now threatened to suspend work in the Ring of Fire due to the lack of government leadership.

Minister, how can you still sit there and watch as the remaining few companies threaten to leave, taking good jobs with them?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly was at Meet the Miners Day with my colleague from the New Democratic Party. Indeed, he was there when we were having good conversations with representatives from Noront Resources, who remain committed to this project in a very, very significant and real way.

Certainly, the way he characterizes the history, we all know, may I say, that Cliffs Natural Resources, as a company, had some other significant challenges. What is important is that we now have a company, Noront Resources, working very closely with First Nations, working very much on new assets that they've been able to acquire, with the commitment of moving this project forward.

Once again—and I find myself doing this with some frequency with the member—I say that we need to work

together in a positive fashion, as opposed to seeing the actual challenges being insurmountable. The bottom line is that we're moving forward on the project, we're working closely with industry and with First Nations, and we're looking forward to working with our federal government as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Noront is expected to halt spending by year's end, if it doesn't see any progress, causing them to lay off most of their workers. You had eight years, Minister. You failed to come up with a plan that will create good jobs, build infrastructure, reduce the high price of electricity and work with First Nations.

Noront and its investors are increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement on your government infrastructure commitment and First Nations agreements. Cliffs warned you, you did not listen and they're gone. Now Noront is warning you.

Minister, will your government take action now? Will you listen before Noront investors bail and you are responsible for killing a \$60-billion project in this province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a little rich to be listening to a representative of a party that allocated zero dollars to the Ring of Fire—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —let alone the official opposition, I should have mentioned earlier, who actually voted against our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let alone the official opposition, who get up and ask questions instead of working with us, and a party that actually voted against the \$1-billion commitment that our government made toward transportation infrastructure.

The long and short is that we have an extremely positive working relationship, certainly with Noront Resources and with many other companies in the Ring of Fire. We're working—we're very engaged in working—with the First Nations in order to make sure they see the benefits—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It would be helpful to address the Chair.

New question.

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the minister responsible for poverty reduction. As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the minister set a bold goal to end homelessness in Ontario. Earlier this year, this minister and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing established the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness.

As a former nurse, I knew several chronically homeless people who made frequent visits to the emergency room, often stating that they had nowhere else to go. They were sometimes not eligible for community health-related services, as they had no fixed address, and would return to the emergency room for care and shelter in the cold weather.

Adequate housing is one of the most fundamental determinants of health, due largely to its role in creating a stable living environment. Research has shown that people who are adequately housed require fewer and less expensive medical interventions.

Speaker, could the minister please give us an update on the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Cambridge for a very important question.

Speaker, when we released our Poverty Reduction Strategy last fall, we did set an ambitious and an aspirational goal to end homelessness in Ontario. We set that goal because it's the right thing to do. There simply is no excuse in a province as rich as Ontario that anyone goes without a home. And we set that target because it's the smart thing to do. Homelessness is, in fact, very expensive, as we heard from the member from Cambridge.

We did establish an expert panel, co-chaired by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and myself, to get advice on how to move from that aspirational goal to the more concrete goal of actually ending homelessness. We heard from people living much of their lives with undiagnosed mental health issues. We heard from young people who had no place to call home. We heard from survivors. We heard—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Speaker, it sounds like the expert panel on homelessness has done some excellent work making sure that the voices of some of the most vulnerable people in our society are heard. Studies have shown that homeless people experience a much greater rate of physical and mental health issues than the general population.

Several years ago, the citizens of my community of Cambridge built The Bridges, a shelter that houses men, women and families experiencing homelessness. It provides a range of programs designed to assist in making a smooth transition back into the community.

Having a safe and secure place to live has been found to be a significant part of recovering from mental illness and addiction, in gaining employment, food security, access to social services and access to health care.

Speaker, through you to the minister, I'd like to hear more about the panel's final report and how our government is planning to tackle homelessness.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was pleased yesterday to be the keynote speaker at the National Alliance to End Homelessness conference in Montreal, where I updated those people from across the country on our plan to move forward. Speaker, for too long, we haven't challenged ourselves to address this problem. We can't turn a blind

eye anymore, and we're not going to. Here are the things that we are moving on.

We're adopting the panel's definition of homelessness. We're adopting the four priority areas that the panel identified: aboriginal homelessness, youth homelessness, people transitioning from provincially funded institutions and programs, and chronic homelessness. The third thing we're doing is we're acting on the panel's advice and we're setting an aggressive but achievable target to end chronic homelessness in 10 years. We're requiring municipalities to enumerate homelessness in their communities and develop plans to end it. And we're setting aside \$10 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Attorney General. With four OPP investigations regarding Liberal misconduct; plus a multi-million dollar lawsuit by T. Boone Pickens against the IESO; and the US justice department investigation under the corrupt business practices act regarding NextEra, it appears your seatmate, the energy minister, is complicit in many of these cases. The minister knows that the US justice department is investigating US companies that are promising Ontario municipalities money in exchange for municipal support which financially benefits these very same companies. It appears that the Attorney General's seatmate is facilitating and encouraging this financial impropriety under the Green Energy Act between foreign businesses and our municipal partners.

Speaker, does the Attorney General condone foreign businesses offering bribes on condition that the municipal government passes a resolution to support and promote those businesses?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that in different sectors in Ontario—for example, in the municipal sector, in the development industry—municipalities, in fact, can obtain benefits from developers who are building subdivisions, apartment buildings etc. There are provisions in the Municipal Act that enable that to happen. They work extremely well.

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In this particular case, for a party that has been complaining that they were being ignored in the renewable energy sector, we have created a process that gives them tremendous say in whether they go forward or not. We do have a point system that enables our proponents to negotiate with the municipality for particular benefits. It's working extremely well, and in that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'll do it in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure you certainly will.

Before we progress, I'd like to caution the member not to get too close to making an accusation that he knows would be unparliamentary. Carry on.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, again to the Attorney General: Although the energy minister may condone this—this I'm asking to the Attorney General—in my riding, Addington Highlands has been offered millions of dollars if they help Liberal-friendly NextEra score hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts from the IESO. The deal requires the municipality to act in a manner contrary to the expressed public interest and allows foreign-owned NextEra to squeeze more money out of taxpayers.

These aren't typical community vibrancy funds. They coerced municipal governments to enact resolutions that promote foreign-owned companies.

Speaker, why does the Attorney General, Ontario's chief law officer, allow and permit her seatmate to tarnish Ontario's reputation and bring the administration of law into disrepute? Will the Attorney General initiate an investigation into these corrupt practices?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member is so disrespecting rural municipalities, it's beyond belief. What he is saying, and I challenge him to identify the councils and the councillors that are being bribed in the province of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I challenge the member to identify the councils and the councillors, who have passed unanimous resolutions, that are being bribed. He is showing so much disrespect for municipal councils in rural Ontario, it's beyond belief. He should be apologizing to every single rural municipality in the province of Ontario.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier. Londoners should be able to trust that they can access the care they need every step of the way. But, as the Auditor General found, this province still doesn't have an integrated palliative care system.

In London, families and front-line nurses are worried about the transfer of acute palliative care beds out of Victoria Hospital and the loss of thousands of nursing care hours. St. Joseph's Health Care agrees that there are gaps in palliative care services in London and that "a more comprehensive, government-supported approach is needed."

When will this Liberal government step up, stop further cuts to acute care and increase the palliative care supports that Londoners and patients deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, it's important to clarify that we aren't making any cuts to acute care, as the member opposite has alleged. In fact, our budget in health care continues to increase year after year, and we're making important investments across the health care spectrum. Palliative care, of course, is a critical element of that.

I know that the new hospice in London is going to be an important addition as well. My parliamentary assistant, John Fraser, has taken on the task ably, with confidence, to actually follow through on the government's commitment to fund 20 more hospices around this province. In Ontario, we were the first government to ever fund our hospices. We're proud of that fact. We're proud of the commitment that we've made to extend that funding.

I'd be happy to talk more about palliative care in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, back to the Acting Premier: The need for palliative care is growing across this province, but across the province, palliative care services are a patchwork at best. Seniors and front-line nurses in London are worried that acute palliative care services are being cut in hospitals, which are already grappling with four-year frozen budgets under the Liberal government.

Why won't the Acting Premier admit that London needs more palliative care beds and more support for families, not just a shuffling of the beds at the expense of acute care in hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm sure that the member opposite would agree with me when I say that for the provision of palliative care, it's important that we provide that care where it is as close to the patient as possible. Often that's in the community, often it's in a hospice environment; sometimes it's in a hospital environment. But what we need to do is work to make sure that care is of the highest quality. In fact, despite the fact that—when the NDP were government, they had no end-of-life strategy. We were the first government in Ontario's history to develop, several years ago, an end-of-life strategy for Ontarians.

Again, I've tasked the parliamentary assistant for my ministry, John Fraser—what he's doing is entertaining consultations across this province to update our end-of-life strategy, to develop a specific palliative care strategy, as well, that includes additional funding for hospitals; it includes making sure that we're providing the best quality of care for Ontarians.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As the member for Brampton—Springdale, I know how important transit and transportation are for those living in my community. Time and time again, I have constituents tell me that we need to continue to invest in critical infrastructure projects that will keep Ontario moving.

My constituents want to know that their government is making those investments that truly count. Can the minister please tell members of this House what our government is doing to invest in transit and transportation infrastructure across the province?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Brampton for that wonderful question, and I want to thank her for her advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

Of course, our government is making the single largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history. We are moving forward with our plan to unlock the value of certain public assets, as we committed to, and use the proceeds of these to help support investments in transit and transportation infrastructure projects through the Moving Ontario Forward plan.

These kinds of projects will include, inside the GTHA, making service enhancements to the GO Transit network and laying the foundation for regional express rail and providing funding for projects like Hamilton's LRT. Outside the GTHA, these funds will allow the province to launch a new Connecting Links program, which will provide funding for northern and rural municipalities, along with a wide range of other crucial public infrastructure projects.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I entertain points of order, I do have two quick announcements.

In the west members' gallery, a former member from Riverdale in the 35th and 36th, Broadview-Greenwood in the 37th, Toronto-Danforth in the 37th and 38th, and the first female Deputy Speaker in Ontario's history: Marilyn Churley.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My friends, before we're dismissed, I have sad news. Our pages are finished today. I do know that we want to show our appreciation to these wonderful, hard-working students.

Applause.

JOHN ROBERT GALLAGHER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have some points of order. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, yesterday we found out that another Canadian has fallen in combat.

John Robert Gallagher grew up in rural Ontario, in Wheatley, Essex county. He grew up to be a man of courage and conviction. He was a former member of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He left the safety and security of Canada and volunteered to help defend women and children in Syria and Iraq from the tyranny of IS.

I would like to recognize, and I'm sure this House would like to recognize, both his courage and his virtue and express our condolences to John Gallagher's family.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London-Fanshawe, on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My guests were here early, but I just want to say that I'm very delighted to welcome to Queen's Park students from the École

secondaire Gabriel-Dumont, a French school in my riding of London-Fanshawe, and their teacher Pierre Ozorak.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport, on a point of order.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to stand on this point of order to wish my great colleagues a happy birthday. Two wonderful ministers are celebrating birthdays today, Minister Jaczek and Minister Matthews; and Minister Orazietti will be celebrating a birthday next week. Happy birthday to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe we have everyone covered.

DEFERRED VOTES

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take their seats.

On September 28, 2015, Madame Meilleur moved second reading of Bill 115. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Norm
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hoggart, Ann	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Orazietti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Brown, Patrick	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.

Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Martins, Cristina
Fedeli, Victor	Matthews, Deborah
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McDonell, Jim
Forster, Cindy	McGarry, Kathryn
Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor
French, Jennifer K.	McMeekin, Ted
Gates, Wayne	McNaughton, Monte
Gélinas, France	Meilleur, Madeleine

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 95; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2015, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p. m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'd like to welcome Mr. Grzegorz Morawski, consul general of the Republic of Poland, who's with us today. Welcome.

I have one more. I don't know if he's lurking in here yet, but I saw him in the hallways. You may have felt the building shake. Former MPP Steve Peters, my predecessor, is here. You can't introduce him—he's not in the House. I'd welcome him to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's one way around it.

Further introductions of guests? The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would never suggest that anybody should introduce Steve Peters.

However, I would like to introduce Brett Schuyler from the Ontario Apple Growers and Tom Wilson from Spirit Tree Estate Cidery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

On a personal note, I can't help but notice that there are some guests in the gallery who are wearing medals. That indicates to me that they are veterans. I won't define them definitively—who they are veterans from—but I do want to say to them, thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Mr. Speaker, on November 11, next week, Canadians and Ontarians will be reflecting on the many sacrifices made by men and women that ensured

Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

Canada's freedoms and values. On this day, Polish Canadians will also be reflecting on their own history of fighting for the protection of the same values.

November 11, 1918, is a powerful and historic date for the Polish nation. It is the day on which Poland regained its independence following 123 years of partitions, occupations and basically being wiped off the map of Europe. Following the partitions perpetuated by Austria, Prussia and Russia and many uprisings and struggles, Poles managed to win back their freedom and rightful sovereignty, owing largely to their patriotism and heroism.

This year marks the 97th anniversary since Poland re-established itself as an important European democracy.

Polish Independence Day is the most important national holiday in Poland.

Today, I am pleased to welcome Mr. Grzegorz Morawski, consul general of the Republic of Poland, to the Legislature.

For Poles around the world, this day celebrates the strength, bravery and resilience of their people, who, for centuries, fought to maintain their national sovereignty against many perpetrators who have tried to make an affront.

Here in Ontario, we are proud of the contributions Polish Canadians have made to our province since first settling here more than 155 years ago.

I have been very pleased to meet many Polish Canadians over the last few months and to attend various community events.

Earlier this year, I had the honour to pay tribute to the all-volunteer Polish Blue Army and lay a wreath at the annual Niagara-on-the-Lake pilgrimage organized by the Canadian Polish Congress.

Today, I'd like to extend my warmest wishes to all Polish Canadians celebrating Polish Independence Day.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm proud to dedicate my statement today to the members of OPSEU Local 294, who, after two years, are still without a first contract with their employer, CarePartners. The community nurses have been on strike for over six months. Meanwhile, this government has done nothing for the nurses and their patients, nor has it taken any steps to stop the continued trend of privatization of our home care services.

For over six months, over 1,400 affected patients in my region have gone without consistent complex nursing care. These are patients who depend on community nurses for cancer care, dialysis and wound treatment.

With the holiday season around the corner, members of Local 294 in the region are starting an "Adopt a Striker" campaign to support striking nurses and their families, who will no doubt suffer the most during the holiday season.

It's unacceptable that our nurses have to go to these extremes to ensure that the patients who depend on them are getting the services they need.

Sadly, the CarePartners CEO—a for-profit—is too concerned about letting her own salary and perks balloon to more than \$700,000 than putting patients and respect for our nurses first. I'd like to thank OPSEU Local 294 for starting "Adopt a Striker"—particularly at Christmas—and for their incredible support for ensuring that striking nurses will be able to enjoy and celebrate the holiday season accordingly.

ONTARIO FOOD TERMINAL

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Recently, I was very pleased to tour the Ontario Food Terminal in Etobicoke-Lakeshore and meet with their general manager, Bruce Nicholas, and his wonderful management team.

I am very proud to have the terminal in my riding. This is the largest wholesale fruit and produce distribution centre in Canada and the third-largest in North America. The terminal distributes over two billion pounds of produce annually—an average of 5.5 million pounds per day. Located on 40 acres of land, it was established in 1954 to provide a convenient, efficient and low-cost receiving and shipping facility for wholesalers of fruit and produce, and now serves all of eastern Canada and some of the northern United States.

The Ontario Food Terminal acts as a stock exchange for fruits and vegetables, where prices are determined by supply and demand and can change daily. Owned and operated by the Ontario Food Terminal Board, an enterprise operating under the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, no public monies are used in the operation of this unique facility. It's entirely self-funded from fees charged to the users of the facility. They also have a wonderful farmers' market for over 400 tenants who sell local Ontario produce.

The terminal supports Ontario farmers, local fruit and vegetable stores, and independent supermarkets. I'm very proud that the terminal is making a number of renovations and improvements to maintain its place as the premier fresh-food distribution market in Canada. The modernization of the food terminal will guarantee its role in our food distribution system for decades to come.

DIWALI

Ms. Sylvia Jones: At this special time of year, people of East Indian heritage across the world are celebrating the Festival of Lights. Diwali signifies the victory of light over darkness. This November, thousands of our East Indian friends in Ontario will light candles during Diwali as a reminder that light always prevails over darkness.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, has attended Diwali celebrations in the past few weeks and will be attending many more in the weeks to come, with our caucus. I look forward to attending a Diwali party in Brampton tomorrow evening, where I'll have an opportunity to reconnect with friends and indulge in the rich Indian culture.

At each event we attend, we are grateful to be welcomed by members of the community with warmth and openness. This is a testament to how Indian cultures

contribute to Ontario's multicultural mosaic. We have the great privilege in this province of experiencing the best of many different heritages. This is what makes Ontario the best place in the world to live and something we should never take for granted.

Mr. Speaker, the Indo-Canadian community in Ontario, consisting of almost 700,000 people, is vital to the economic, social and cultural complexion of our province. Since the early part of the 20th century, Indo-Canadians have played an important contribution in Ontario's growth and success.

On behalf of Patrick Brown and the official opposition, I wish all our friends light and happiness during Diwali.

THE SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's never too early to start thinking about Christmas. Some of us these days need a little inspiration and motivation. To that end, Knox Waterloo is hosting a musical celebration, The Sounds of Christmas, in support of KidsAbility. KidsAbility is the recognized leader in Waterloo and Guelph-Wellington for empowering children and youth with a wide range of complex special needs to realize their potential.

This year's musical organizer, Nicole Guse, spoke passionately about this event. For her, it is a way to pay it forward and express her gratitude, as her family was fortunate enough to access support through KidsAbility.

This fundraiser also highlights the musical talent in our community, and, finally, it represents a wonderful opportunity to come together in celebration, really of generosity but also of community and compassion. It reminds me of something that spiritual leader Henri Nouwen wrote: "Every human being has a great, yet often unknown, gift to care, to be compassionate, to become present to the other, to listen, to hear and to receive. If that gift would be set free and made available, miracles could take place."

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: Families that find the support and compassionate education at KidsAbility often express their wonder at this miracle of accessing this unique and special place where every child has the opportunity to reach their potential. For parents and children, it is a place of hope.

I hope that, if you are in the region, you will join us at Knox Waterloo for the musical The Sounds of Christmas in support of KidsAbility. More information can be found on the Knox Waterloo website.

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JUSTICE RYAN

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted today to tell the House about Justice Ryan, who is a resident of Beaches-East York and a grade 12 student at Malvern Collegiate. Now, Ms. Ryan was recently awarded one of six James Bartleman Aboriginal Youth Creative Writing Awards. This prestigious award, which was created by our 27th Lieutenant Governor, celebrates aboriginal youth writing

and was presented in recognition of Ms. Ryan's courageous and innovative comic strip called *The Escape*.

The *Escape* tells the story of a young girl who flees from a residential school, only to be caught and forced to endure horrendous abuse. But along the way the story's hero learns not to judge people by their looks, and to take strength in her aboriginal heritage. In an interview with the *Beach Mirror*, a community newspaper, Ms. Ryan recounts that her goal was to not only promote awareness about residential schools and the terrible abuses that happened there, but also to share a story of courage.

Mr. Speaker, for a grade 12 student to tackle such an important subject and for that work to be presented and recognized at the highest levels by the province of Ontario is itself a story of courage. I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Ryan on October 26 here at Queen's Park, when she received her award, with Mr. Bartleman; the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade; and the current Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

On behalf of the House and the constituents of Beaches—East York, I congratulate Justice Ryan on her achievements and I commend her for celebrating her aboriginal heritage.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I am pleased to rise today to read to you in the Legislature a poem written by Comrade Lionel Murphy, a 90-year-old veteran with Legion Branch 23 in the city of North Bay. It's called "On This Great Day."

I wandered through the fields today
A field of marble stone
So many young men laying there
Some stones are marked unknown

They gave their lives that we might live
The life we live today
Make sure the life they gave for us
Was not just thrown away

So many that have fallen
In battle lost and won
So many young lives taken
Before their lives began

No loving wives to bear a family
Just kith and kin to mourn
They fought for love
Not for fame
For love of country
They lit the flame

They died alone
Or in a crowd
For those that did so
Let's be proud

The sacrifice they made was real
And now they lay in far-off fields
Their duty done, the torch is passed
We must not let their memory lapse
And take the torch that they have passed

For if we fail to carry on
Our liberty may soon be gone
And many young lives will bear the cross
Of liberty that we have lost

I say thank you to Lionel Murphy in North Bay.
Applause.

COMMUNITY LIVING BURLINGTON

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's my pleasure to rise in the House to acknowledge a wonderful organization in my riding, Community Living Burlington, on the occasion of their 60th anniversary open house, which I had the privilege of attending on October 25.

This open house was a celebration of 60 years of service to the community of Burlington and a reflection of Community Living's humble beginnings, where, in 1955, a group of parents met to discuss educational opportunities for their children. A grassroots organization was formed to care for children with developmental disabilities since, as was the practice then, they were sent to large institutions away from their families. Very sadly, their parents thought this was their only option. As executive director Judy Pryde said, "Parents were told by medical professionals that they should not, and could not, take care of their children."

Today, thanks to the love and determination of those parents, Community Living Burlington has grown to an organization that provides support to more than 400 people with a developmental disability and their families, thanks to an exceptional staff team of over 300 employees. These services include children's inclusion services, residential supports, employment services and day programs. These programs assist their clients in developing independence, building social, emotional and community participation skills, while encouraging learning and professional development. And they provide important respite to parents and caregivers, too.

I am deeply grateful I had the opportunity to celebrate 60 wonderful years with Community Living. I want to thank them for inviting me to their wonderful celebration. On behalf of all of Burlington, I would like to thank them for their continued selfless service to our community.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

REPRÉSENTATION DES FEMMES AU PARLEMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I know all of us were interested to see the results of the election on October 19,

but the results are important in ways that go far beyond party lines.

J'étais fière de voir qu'il y avait un résultat pour les femmes dans cette élection qui bat tous les records. Dans le 42^e Parlement on a élu 88 femmes qui représentent les circonscriptions à travers le Canada.

These women represent 26% of the seats in the House of Commons, 13 more women than before. I'm happy that the Prime Minister has fulfilled a promise made to appoint a cabinet with gender parity, with women for the first time making up half of the federal cabinet.

I'm also proud, actually, to be elected as part of a group of 38 women elected to the Ontario Legislature, and I value and appreciate the unique voice my fellow MPPs bring to the Legislature. I look forward to seeing this trend continue in Parliament.

I encourage every single young woman to consider politics as a career. Merci.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAMILY CAREGIVER DAY ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 138, An Act to proclaim Family Caregiver Day / Projet de loi 138, Loi proclamant le Jour des aidants naturels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank people in the gallery who came and who were the inspiration for that bill, starting with Lisa Levin, who is the chair of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition; Joanne Bertrand; Laura Pettinger; Delia Sinclair Frigault; and Robert TerSteege. They are people who are part of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition and who wanted this bill brought forward.

The bill is very simple. It proclaims the first Tuesday in April of each year as Family Caregiver Day, and it will be a day to support the 2.6 million caregivers in Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is requesting permission to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you. I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 4 and 5 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 4 and 5 be waived.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'ADOPTION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As many of us know, November is Adoption Awareness Month.

Il s'agit d'un mois important pour mon ministère et pour de nombreux Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Adoption Awareness Month gives us the opportunity to increase outreach and education efforts about adoption, the children and youth who need a permanent home, the benefits of adopting, and the financial and other resources available to adoptive families.

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Children and youth in the care of our child welfare system come to us from a variety of circumstances. While they're in our care, dedicated staff and professionals nurture, guide and serve these very vulnerable young people. Our goal is to increase the number of kids in care who are adopted, giving them the same loving families and opportunities as children in permanent families have.

C'est pourquoi, en septembre, j'ai annoncé plusieurs changements positifs apportés à notre système d'adoption provincial.

We are expanding the age of eligibility for adoptive parents to receive targeted subsidies. We're investing in a province-wide post-adoption family support program to help new families settle in with each other. We are also partnering with Wendy's Wonderful Kids to find adoptive families for historically harder-to-place children. These initiatives will help us find permanent homes with loving families for these young people. We know that growing up in a stable family significantly strengthens and improves outcomes for children. It supports their health, their education and their participation in the workforce on a long-term basis.

Nous avons déjà accompli des progrès considérables en matière de soutien aux familles adoptives.

We provide financial subsidies for eligible parents who adopt or take legal custody of crown wards who are

eight years or older, or sibling groups. These subsidies make a real difference in supporting families to meet the child's needs without undue financial hardship.

We also remove legal barriers so that more children in care can be adopted through the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act. We fund the Adoption Council of Ontario to manage the Adopt-Ontario program, a website to help children's aid societies match children with families in Ontario who are prepared to adopt. With partners in the child welfare sector, we expanded the Adoption Resource Exchange event from twice each year to at least six times every year across the province. These events help match prospective parents with children in need of a forever home.

In Ontario, approximately 1,000 adoptions are completed each year through our children's aid societies.

Je suis heureuse de déclarer que, compte tenu des améliorations que j'ai annoncées en septembre, nous nous attendons à ce que ce chiffre augmente.

As I mentioned, to help more children and youth find permanent, nurturing families, we are funding 15 adoption recruiters in partnership with Wendy's Wonderful Kids. The Wendy's Wonderful Kids program focuses on finding homes for historically hard-to-place children, primarily those who are older or who have special needs. It works. With our addition of 15 adoption recruiters and Wendy's Wonderful Kids, their commitment has resulted in an offer to hire four more recruiters in Ontario, which will increase the capacity to match families with children more than fivefold in the next year.

There's more. We are requiring children's aid societies to profile children in the care of the children's aid society who are available for adoption on the Adopt-Ontario website. We're also developing service standards to improve the adoption experience for prospective families and children and youth. And we are working with the Adoption Council of Ontario and Adopt4Life to establish a post-adoption support program to support families well after the adoption process has been finalized.

We're also further helping adoptive families to care for their children by extending the age range for eligibility for targeted subsidies to ages 18 to 21 and increasing the income threshold and monthly subsidy amount. Finally, we'll be requiring greater use of culturally appropriate placement options for First Nations children and youth.

Nous prenons, chaque année, d'autres mesures pour les enfants et les jeunes pris en charge, et nous continuons à faire davantage pour ces enfants.

We all share the same goal: to help these children and youth reach their full potential in a safe and loving family.

SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm proud to rise today to mark the 100th anniversary of Ontario's Soldiers' Aid Com-

mission. Joining us in the Legislature today in both members' galleries are the commission chair, Colin R. Rowe; vice-chair John Stapleton; and commissioners Homer R. Brooks, Alfred H.L. Harris and William Earle Thomas. I'm also pleased to welcome two commissioners who have been newly appointed to the commission: Rosemarie McGuire and my constituent Susan Beharrelli.

On November 10, 1915, a group of dedicated Ontarians, with the support of the provincial government, came together to meet a growing need. Thousands of soldiers were returning home from the front lines of the First World War. They were returning with physical and psychological injuries, and there were not sufficient support services to help them. Many did not return, and their families were coping with the devastation of war with little or no support.

The Ontario Soldiers' Aid Commission came into being, with its first offices here in the Legislative Building. In the ensuing years, the work of the commission expanded to meet the growing needs of soldiers and their families. By 1916, 37 commission branches were operating in communities throughout Ontario, assisting soldiers by finding work and housing for returning soldiers; arranging training; advocating for fair wages and pensions; reaching out to soldiers' families who needed help; and, in 1920, being given all the powers of a children's aid society to serve as the ward for hundreds of Ontario children whose families were impacted by the war.

In fact, the Soldiers' Aid Commission was one of the first examples of social services in Ontario. It preceded the formation of Veterans Affairs by 29 years. Later, as Canadians fought in the Second World War and the Korean War, the commission again rose to meet the needs of Ontario's returning soldiers and families left behind.

On Remembrance Day, we as a society stop to reflect on the sacrifices of our veterans. The Soldiers' Aid Commission thinks of those sacrifices every day and continues to provide assistance to Ontario's veterans and their families. To help celebrate this milestone anniversary, later today commissioners will join the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, for a formal reception in the Lieutenant Governor's suite.

To share their important history with Ontarians, the commission has produced a commemorative book entitled Ontario Soldiers' Aid Commission: 100 Years of Assistance to Veterans in Need, 1915–2015. It chronicles the commission's century of groundbreaking support and advocacy on behalf of veterans. They fought successfully for services to help veterans return to the workforce and for pensions for veterans and their families.

Next week, when we pause on Remembrance Day to recall the sacrifices made by Canada's courageous women and men, I invite all honourable members to also recognize the enormous contributions that the Soldiers' Aid Commission has made to the lives of Ontario veterans and their families over the past 100 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus and my leader, Patrick Brown, to respond to the minister's statement on Adoption Awareness Month. I have to say that a lot has been done in 10, 20 years.

But I was struck, because I attended a Canadian Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians luncheon just prior to coming to the House—and Marilyn Churley was there. For anyone who has a love of Ontario history, Marilyn Churley was a minister of the crown under the Bob Rae government, but what I remember Marilyn Churley for more than anything else was her advocacy and her initiatives related to open adoptions.

I think all of us in the chamber would agree that the fact that we can look at and support open adoptions has made a huge difference in young people being able to find their forever homes, so I just want to give a shout-out to Marilyn. I think that what she did then and what she did in her post-parliamentary life with her book made a great deal of difference to how people approached adoptions and how people were willing to look at different ways of putting together a family, and quite frankly, I'm sure has made a difference in literally hundreds of young people's lives. So to Marilyn: Thank you for that. It was just one of those passing things that when I saw her, it was like, "Yes, adoption."

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Anyway, the action towards more types of adoptions, more abilities for kin care, for people to take on those responsibilities—particularly with young people with challenges—is something that we on this side obviously support and endorse.

As I say, I'm pleased to see that we continue to raise awareness and encourage people to look at adoption as a wonderful way to expand your family.

SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise today in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Soldiers' Aid Commission.

The Soldiers' Aid Commission was first established in 1915, with a mandate to take care of, and to find employment for, members of the Canadian Forces who returned to Canada during the period of war. It was continued in 1960, and now provides emergency aid to veterans of the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War.

I believe that all of our returned soldiers and veterans deserve our gratitude and assistance.

While veterans' services are, largely, a responsibility of the federal government, I'm glad to know that our veterans in need can receive support from the province.

In celebration of the 100th anniversary, members of the Soldiers' Aid Commission have come together to write a book about its history. As someone with a long-held interest in history, I am very much looking forward

to seeing the book tonight at the reception being held in the Lieutenant Governor's suite.

Many of us will be heading back to our ridings next week to partake in our local Remembrance Day celebrations.

In Perth—Wellington, I'm looking forward to attending a Remembrance Day assembly at Stratford Northwestern Secondary School, and I will be attending as many ceremonies as I can throughout the week.

It's important for us to all come together to remember the sacrifices of those who have fought for our peace and freedom. We must also thank those who currently serve our country across the world and at home. They and their families continue to make sacrifices to protect Canada.

I would encourage everyone to support their local veterans' associations and to wear a poppy in remembrance of our servicemen and servicewomen.

On November 11, please take the time to attend a Remembrance Day ceremony and pay your respects.

I would like to congratulate the Soldiers' Aid Commission on its 100th anniversary and thank its members for their commitment to our veterans. I look forward to meeting with you all this afternoon at your reception.

Lest we forget.

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Miss Monique Taylor: As the NDP critic for children and youth services, it is my pleasure to speak today in recognition of Adoption Awareness Month.

Everyone deserves a family. We need people close to us who can be proud of our successes, who can nurse us through ill health, who can lighten the load of whatever might burden us, who can correct us when we're wrong. We all make mistakes. Sometimes we really mess things up, and when we do, we need support and help from those around us—the type of support that comes from the unconditional love of a family. We rely on that support not just as children, but throughout our lives. Everyone deserves that, but not everyone has it.

When adoption is mentioned or when it is portrayed in books or on the screen, we usually think of babies, because adoptees are usually younger children. The fact is that 60% of children and youth available for adoption are over the age of 13, yet only 5% of those adopted are between the ages of 13 and 18. Far too many age out of care, with no support and no idea where to go from there. These youth want, need and deserve a family.

I think back again to the My Real Life Book report from the Youth Leaving Care Hearings and one particular quote: "Children's aid saved my life, but at this moment I felt betrayed and abandoned. I was not ready to leave care! I felt their love, guidance and support was unconditional—until I turned 21 and then it became conditional."

The very sad reality is that youth who age out of care, those who don't have a lifelong family, have a hard time as adults. Fewer than 3% will earn a college or university degree. Within the first two years of leaving care, 25% of

them will become homeless and 25% will be incarcerated. Some 60% of young women leaving care will have had a child within four years, and that child is twice as likely to end up in care. Like its mother and others gone before, that child will enter the child welfare system through no fault of its own. In many ways, it's like we have a system that feeds itself in what seems like a never-ending cycle. But by providing a family for life, adoption can make the crucial difference for so many.

SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome the many folks here from the Soldiers' Aid Commission and the World War II veterans that we have with us today. How absolutely special it is for this date of ceremony. It is nice to have you here.

As we approach Remembrance Day, I feel honoured to speak about the 100th anniversary of the Soldiers' Aid Commission of Ontario. On November 10, 1915, the Soldiers' Aid Commission was established to take care of and to find employment for members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force who returned to Canada during the war. One hundred years later, it's hard for us to appreciate just what those times were like, but it is important for us always to remember what those young men, many of them in fact no more than boys, were put through in the service of their country.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force was the field force created by Canada to serve overseas in the First World War. It was, at the time the Soldiers' Aid Commission was established, entirely comprised of volunteers, as it was for most of the war. Over 600,000 were enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during its existence from 1914 to 1920. This was at a time when the population of the entire country was about one quarter of what it is today.

An extraordinary percentage of Canada's population, the vast majority of them young men, served in the force. They witnessed horrific events and scenes that should be part of no person's life: the mud, the cold, the rats, the incessant bombs, the sniper's bullets and the unimaginable carnage that they caused. Many perished on those far-off fields. Those who made it home brought with them physical and emotional scars that would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

And so the Soldiers' Aid Commission was established. In the years that followed, eligibility was extended to any person who served in the Canadian Armed Forces and who served overseas or served with the Armed Forces in Canada during the First or Second World Wars or the Korean War and is in financial need. Veterans who served in the merchant navy during World War II are also eligible for assistance.

In the present day, the Soldiers' Aid Commission provides funds for hearing aids, glasses and dental needs. They can help with rent, home repairs or moving costs, as well as specialized equipment such as assistive devices, wheelchairs and prosthetics.

I want to congratulate the Soldiers' Aid Commission on behalf of New Democrats on the occasion of their 100th anniversary and in doing so, thank the seven current appointees to the board as well as those who have served in those positions over the years.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I fully support this, will sign it and send it with page Cameron.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

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"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Julia to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Sale of Hydro One.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the decision to sell Hydro One has been made without public input and the sale will be conducted in complete secrecy; and

"Whereas if the people of Ontario lose majority ownership in Hydro One, ratepayers will be forced to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, including higher rates; and

"Whereas Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer has warned the sale of Hydro One would be detrimental to Ontario's financial situation; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has removed independent oversight of Hydro One, including the Auditor General and the Ombudsman.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately stop the sale of Hydro One."

I'll affix my signature to that and give it to page Nicole.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization," and it is signed by hundreds of residents of my riding of London West. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions" of dollars "less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Julia to take to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This is a petition to lower hydro rates.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I will send this with page Samuel.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition that comes from all over the northeast and with Sirpa Luolaja, who is from Azilda in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and my good page Vanessa, from Nickel Belt, will bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of

community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this, affix my name to it and send it with page Marco.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I affix my signature to this.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Julia once again to bring it down to the table of four Clerks.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I have a petition to present to this Legislature.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

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“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition, and I hand it to page Irene.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the" previous "McGuinty-Wynne" Liberal "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this petition and I'm going to send it down with Abby.

FINANCEMENT DES HÔPITAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all around Sudbury and the northeast and was signed by Monsieur et Madame Perrier. It reads as follows:

« Attendu que Horizon Santé-Nord fait face à des défis budgétaires importants qui ont donné lieu à une réduction de 87 000 heures de soins infirmiers en psychiatrie, chirurgie d'un jour, l'unité chirurgicale, en obstétrique, aux services de santé mentale, l'oncologie, les soins intensifs et le département d'urgence ... ; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial de l'Ontario a réduit le financement des hôpitaux en termes réels en dollars pour les huit dernières années; et

« Attendu que ces réductions risqueront des taux plus élevés d'accidents médicaux car les heures de soins infirmiers aux patients seront considérablement réduites dans tout hôpital; »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative d'arrêter les réductions proposées à Horizon Santé-Nord, de protéger les lits et les services et d'augmenter le financement des hôpitaux de l'Ontario avec un plan pour augmenter le financement au moins à la moyenne des autres provinces.

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à la page Jade to bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That unfortunately concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX ABOLITION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 ABOLISSANT L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION DES SUCCESSIONS

Mr. Brown moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to abolish the estate administration tax and provide for related matters / Projet de loi 136, Loi visant à abolir l'impôt sur l'administration des successions et traitant de questions connexes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Patrick Brown: When the ballot draw was made for private members' business shortly after I was sworn in as the MPP for Simcoe North, I was given the date of November 5, and I thought, "What would be more appropriate for a private member's bill than tax relief, in the case of a bill and a change that would help Ontarians?"

As I said during my press conference on Monday, throughout the PC leadership campaign and since I became leader last May, all across the province, people have been telling me again and again that life under the Liberals is more unaffordable. When you go through the list of taxes, government fees and levies that the average resident in Ontario pays each day, each month and every year, the numbers become staggering.

Quand vous passez par la liste des taxes, des frais gouvernementaux et des impôts que les personnes moyennes en Ontario payent chaque jour, chaque mois et chaque année, les chiffres deviennent étonnantes.

It begins with the \$25 fee for a birth certificate for a newborn. Throughout childhood, HST is paid every day on products and services parents buy to raise their child. At the age of 16, they pay \$150 to get their G1, \$88 for their G licence, and every five years, it's another \$81 to renew their licence. They pay taxes on the purchase of their first car, even if it's used. Ils payent des impôts sur l'achat de leur première voiture, même si c'est une voiture d'occasion. Their vehicle licence tag costs them an extra \$108 each year, and each time they gas up the vehicle, they pay a fuel tax.

When they buy their first home, they pay thousands in a land transfer tax, and if this government gets their way, homebuyers will soon be paying additional thousands of dollars for a municipal land transfer tax. I'm hoping that the member for Leeds-Grenville is successful in his fight against this additional tax grab.

They pay property taxes on their homes and cottages. They pay tax to furnish and renovate their homes, and eco fees on electronics. They pay taxes on insurance premiums for their home and vehicles. They pay taxes on the fees to financial planners who help them manage and grow their savings. They pay capital tax gains when they sell their investments and taxes on interest and dividends from what they earn on those investments. They pay payroll taxes for the employees who help them run the family business or family farm. And this government now plans to bring a giant new payroll tax in the form of the ORPP. I am very thankful that the great member for York-Simcoe continues to wage the campaign against that tax increase.

They pay a health tax every year even while this government cuts front-line health care services delivered by doctors, nurses and personal support workers. In their senior years, they pay taxes on the money they draw from their investments, and at the end of their lives, taxes are paid on funeral and burial services. À la fin de leur vie, des impôts sont payés sur les services funéraires et les

enterments. And because you are deemed to have sold all of your property at your death, they pay capital gains taxes on the value of most of their assets on their death. Finally, the government charges \$15 for that death certificate.

If you're getting a common theme here, we pay a lot of tax in Ontario. They tax us from birth to death, and that's what this private member's bill is about. It's to highlight, in a brief summary, the wide variety of taxes throughout our lives in Ontario. That's why, when I learned of the date for my ballot item, I thought a perfect example for tax relief would be to end the death tax.

The graduated tax levied on the value of people's assets on their death is the highest of any province in Canada. Cet impôt est le plus haut dans tout le Canada, de toutes les provinces. C'est seulement 65 \$ au Québec, mais en Ontario, c'est plus de 7 000 \$ pour un exemple moyen. An estate in Ontario valued at \$500,000 would pay \$7,250 in tax, whereas the same estate would pay \$65 in Quebec. Talk about a contrast—\$400 in Alberta, \$2,500 in New Brunswick and \$3,500 in Saskatchewan.

I want to praise the MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex who raised this issue earlier this year when he debated a bill to cap the tax and exempt tax charitable donations made in a will. Despite the overwhelming support that the MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex got for his bill across the province in newspapers and emails and phone calls, the members opposite voted it down on second reading.

I'm taking the fight for affordability one step further and call for this tax to be eliminated. Donc, je prends la lutte pour l'accessibilité un peu plus loin, et je demande que la taxe soit éliminée.

1400

This bill would allow for a probate fee, of about \$180, to continue to be charged to file the necessary court documents to administer the estate. There would be no cost for government; this would cover all the expenses.

The members opposite are going to stand up and say that the estate administration tax was a PC initiative; we've heard their talking points. They're actually wrong. It was the Bob Rae government that, in 1992, took the modest probate fee and, by regulation, tripled the fee by calculating it on the value of a deceased person's assets. The move was challenged in court, and what ended up happening in 1998 is that, based on the court decision, it was required that government put it into law; and it was passed in legislation in 1998.

So why am I calling for an end to the death tax, when it was actually put into legislation by the PC government in 1998? Well, let's look at what has happened in the last 20 years in Ontario. In response, I would ask all members of the House to consider the burden that families faced in 1998, compared to the burden we face today.

In 1998, there was no health tax, no eco fees, no municipal land transfer tax. Sales tax was not payable on as many goods and services as it is today; and on top of that, hydro costs were a lot more affordable. These Liberal taxes add thousands of dollars to the cost of

living in Ontario. By the time someone dies, millions in taxes and fees have been paid on savings, purchases and investments. So my bill provides some much-needed relief and acknowledges to the people of Ontario that they pay enough. They pay enough in this province. You are taxed far too much in Ontario.

Every single one of us in this House can rhyme off the names of constituents we know who have worked hard all their lives to build a business or to see the family farm thrive. When those folks pass away, their families are faced with a whopping bill, with the death taxes payable on the net value of those hard-earned assets. Because all the equity is tied up in hard assets like real estate and equipment, families are often faced with the prospect of selling those hard-earned assets just to pay those death taxes. That just doesn't make good business sense. Not being able to continue running the family business or the family farm just to pay death taxes is bad for Ontario's economy. It's bad for the thousands of people those businesses and farms employ.

We haven't seen many good decisions coming from the government benches lately, so we're hoping that this idea is one that you can rally around. If the government members support this bill today, I'll be the first to applaud them for showing an example of non-partisanship.

What I'd ask you to consider is, if you're talking to your constituents, try to imagine a single constituent in your riding who would say this would be the wrong step for Ontario. You will find universally that your constituents fundamentally believe we are overtaxed in this province, and this is a gesture of fairness. So for those government members here today, and voting later today, consider that. Please do the right thing. Support this bill. You'll have a great opportunity to do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would concur with the member. This is an important debate to be having in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased to lend some of the feedback that I've received from my constituency of Kitchener-Waterloo, but also to relay that over the last year, as our family has moved through the grieving process of losing both in-laws in the space of a year and actually going through this process, that's when we first learned about when the changes to the estate administration tax came into effect, and how little communication had been shared about those changes. It was an eye-opening experience.

There is context and there is history, and the member from Simcoe also referenced the backstory as to how we got to this place in history in the province of Ontario. I'm going to address that as well.

I think it's important for those people who are at home to understand that as parties we don't always see these issues the same way. As it relates to Bill 136, the Estate Administration Tax Abolition Act, 2015, this PMB is proposing that Ontario entirely get rid of the estate administration tax altogether, which is not done anywhere

else in the country. Nowhere else—no other jurisdiction—has abolished and gotten rid of the estate administration tax.

This act essentially widens existing income inequality between the generations, and I'll touch on that in a few minutes. It also incentivizes wealthy individuals to amass their fortunes instead of spending them, and pass them on to future generations. Neither abolishing nor capping the estate administration tax at the high end is progressive. New Democrats, however, are open to reviewing the rates of taxation, recognizing that Ontarians pay the highest estate tax rate in the country. This is where we have to have a conversation about how we got to this place and some of the changes that are actually taking place around estate administration taxation as proposed by the Liberals.

We of course have serious concerns about Bill 136. We also have immense concerns about how the changes to the estate administration tax came into play in Ontario. We do not support the Liberals' regulatory changes that came into force in January 2015 with little warning, and it's disappointing to know that this government has introduced tight deadlines within which an individual must file a detailed description of the deceased's assets, and sanctions for failure to comply with these regulations. Those sanctions could include jail time, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine that. They have only managed to create a more onerous and expensive estate administration process and for no good reason at all.

We do, however, believe that the government's new tight deadlines were introduced under the radar. There was a regulatory change as of January this past year, with little warning, that has only managed to make the process more expensive and somewhat painful. The '90-day window to file a detailed description of the deceased's assets and the sanctions for failure to comply with this tight timeline have only made what is a very challenging experience more challenging.

I reference the fact that we have lost both of our in-laws this year—this is not uncommon. My in-laws, Walter and Shirley Fife, were married for 60 years. My father-in-law passed away during the election, and within the year, Shirley Fife passed away as well. There are nine children, and this was one house for 60 years. So they had 60 years of stuff in that house. It has been a process. It's really interesting, because the stuff means nothing once your loved one passes away; it really doesn't.

Walter Fife was very fond of saying, "You can't take it with you so share it with the people in your life." And in good, Scottish spirit, he also didn't believe in throwing too much out. He was a big recycler—the new-age, or old-age, recycler—so as a family, we have been going through this house just outside of Peterborough. It was a life well lived, but the process of grieving and going through this process of listing this estate and these material goods has only added an entirely new layer of grief, I have to tell you. There is so much at play.

The confusion about what our legal liabilities—of course, of those nine children one of them has to be the

executor; in this instance, it's the baby because that's the most responsible one. But the process has been—quite honestly, the liability that the executor has going through this situation will dissuade other people from being executors, because there is liability and risk. Now the Liberals have introduced the threat of jail time if compliance is not followed through on.

When the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex brought up his issue, I thanked him for raising it, because we need to be talking about this estate administration tax. I didn't agree with the caps they set; I didn't agree with the process. But I did thank them for raising this. We see the commercials on TV that the government has put out right now on the ORPP and on the new sex education curriculum; you haven't seen anything right now on significant changes to the estate administration tax. All of us throughout the summer and into the fall have been hearing from constituents. I must say, there's a great deal of concern and confusion.

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It is unfortunate, though, that some of that confusion, I think, and I'm not sure if the member from Simcoe really realizes this—they're sort of playing on this one fear about the changes that had come in. So, aside from the 90-day window, there is this misunderstanding and a little bit of fearful playfulness, if you will, that somehow assets held before death but not at the time of death—such as insurance payable to a named beneficiary, assets where there is joint ownership with right of survivorship, and real estate outside of Ontario—are not included in the value of the estate. The insurance is not part of this, Mr. Speaker. I think that prior to the changes it was permissible to provide a total valuation of the deceased's estate. The process must be simplified. It must be simplified. The 90-day deadline is really quite something.

The member from Simcoe referenced the issue of how we got here. It is ironic in many respects that the Conservative party continue to put forward private member bills on this issue. To go back in time, back to 1998, after the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that disguising probate fees as a tax was unconstitutional in Ontario, then-Premier Mike Harris had the opportunity to get rid of the probate fees, just get rid of them if they had an issue with them. He, however, decided to reintroduce it as an estate administration tax in order to continue to collect the revenue. This is part of our history as a province.

It is true, though, at the time, Bob Rae—you know Bob Rae, who now identifies as a Liberal—did increase the rates, Mr. Speaker; Bob Rae did. What can I say? He just keeps on giving and giving. Here we are. That's the history of the estate administration tax, how it came to be in this place.

This bill will seek to abolish it and it will cap the fees for filing an estate certification with the court. They are proposing a couple of amendments, which we can't support. For us, this bill doesn't get to the heart of the issue of how the Liberals have moved forward with the estate administration tax, how the timelines came into

play, why there was no consultation and the sanctions that are attached to the administration part of that tax.

What we've heard mostly from our constituents is that there was so little notice. Until you find yourself in this untenable position of dealing, usually in a crisis and, as I said, going through the grieving process—you don't fully realize how onerous this situation is. As I mentioned, we are open to looking at the taxation rates, but this bill, Bill 136, does not get to the heart of the issue that people are feeling in the province of Ontario. Just abolishing the estate administration tax is not the answer.

I do want to make sure that people fully understand this, that the government's new, tight deadlines, which came into effect just this January—this 90-day window to file a detailed description of the deceased's assets, and sanctions for failure to comply with this tight timeline—have only made this process more difficult. Bill 136 does not address the key issue of this. You must be hearing it. The concerns of constituents don't stop halfway through this Legislature.

I just want to leave the Legislature with this one thing. According to a 2012 Ontario Common Front report, Ontario experienced the largest change in income inequality of any province in Canada over the last generation. This is from 1981 to 2010. The fact is that if you were born after 1981, you have lived every year of your life in a society that is becoming more unequal. Progressive tax measures are therefore important. As Walter Fife used to say—he didn't mind paying taxes, as long as those taxes were put to good use, like education, like health care, and as long as they weren't wasted.

I must say, there's a fair amount of waste. As I try to follow the money in this place, it becomes more and more convoluted. Even when financial accountability officers report economic modelling to this government, this government refuses to acknowledge that that independent fiscal analysis has some credibility and is valuable to them and, more importantly, to the people of this province.

I thank the member from Simcoe North for raising the issue of the estate administration tax, but New Democrats cannot support a taxation change that is not progressive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great privilege, this afternoon, to provide a few remarks on Bill 136, which has been brought forward by my good friend the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Simcoe North.

I was quite delighted to hear the remarks of the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, talking about the Fife family. I believe she knows that the lineage of the Fife family, of course, goes right back to David Fife, who was the discoverer, in Peterborough county, of Red Fife wheat, which was a great variety of wheat that would withstand rust. It was grown exclusively throughout Ontario. During the Laurier days, it was transported to western Canada, and Red Fife wheat became the staple of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo should take great pride in the legacy of her family, the Fife family.

It's very interesting today. I'm always interested when we want to roll back the hands of time. I believe that this original piece of taxation was brought in in 1998, when Michael Harris was the Premier of the province of Ontario. Normally, I'm a person who wouldn't want to undo the great legacy of one Michael Harris, the wonderful member from Nipissing.

I do want to talk about a little history here. Back in 1963, when Lester Pearson, who spent some time in the great riding of Peterborough as a student, became Prime Minister of Canada, part of his platform was to establish the Carter commission on progressive taxation. The late Walter Gordon, of course, was his finance minister. The first Gordon budget was to initiate the Carter commission, the Royal Commission on Taxation, because there generally was a feeling that taxation in Canada lacked a number of progressive measures.

For those members in the House, they should take the time to go to the legislative library—the volumes of the Carter commission are there; they make great nighttime reading—to look at the exact details of taxation in Canada.

When Mr. Carter started his commission, he started it from this premise: He said, "A buck is a buck is a buck," and that things should be taxed from that principle—so every buck that's earned through income and other ways should be taxed in a very progressive measure.

Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't expect me to say that Mr. Harris may have brought in something very progressive in 1998. I certainly don't know his thinking back in 1998, because I never got the privilege to be here until 2003. But I know you were a Harris insider in those days, as a member of the caucus, so I know you know exactly what Mr. Harris was thinking back in 1998. You and Gary Carr and others were there together, contributing input during that government, I'm sure. I don't want to quote you, but I'm quite sure you and Mr. Carr and others were saying to the Premier of the day, "This is a pretty progressive idea that we want to bring forward in 1998," in terms of putting a level of taxation on estates in Ontario to reflect what has always been the principle, whether it's taxation across Canada or taxation at the provincial level, going back to the Carter commission that "a buck is a buck is a buck"; and that should always be the principle of applying taxes not only in the provinces but indeed throughout Canada.

So I look at this bill today. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo raised some very good points. I do have my speaking points now; I better get back to the speaking points to keep the people in the whips' office happy. I've got to get back to the speaking points.

During the development of the regulation, consultations were held with the Ontario Bar Association, the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee of the province of Ontario, and the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners. This regulation was modified in response to some feedback that was received.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're a very fair individual. You would know that if you were consulting on such an issue

in terms of estate taxation, you would consult with the Ontario Bar Association, representing all the very distinguished lawyers in the province of Ontario. You would also consult with the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee and you would also consult with the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners. That is very important.

I can see them now, the good folks in Peterborough riding; they're clicking on their Cogeco clicker, station 95, to watch what is going on here this afternoon. So I want to say hello to all those good folks from Peterborough who have just tuned in.

We want to make sure that the new regulation in place is equally applied across the board, that people know about that. To be fair, I have received emails on this particular issue and I wanted to reply back that we're not introducing a new tax to the province of Ontario. And why would I ever want to undo the great legacy of one Michael Harris?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased today to speak to the Estate Administration Tax Abolition Act. I'm very proud of our PC leader for bringing forward this bill so that we can give families, farmers and small businesses some tax relief in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the death tax is a cruel tax inflicted on families at a terrible time and, frankly, the people of Ontario absolutely despise this tax. I know that's a message that our leader heard clearly as soon as he got here, and I congratulate him on bringing forward this decisive bill to finally deal with this issue.

As this Legislature knows, it's an issue that I've been speaking about now for a while. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who signed petitions and came forward with stories of how the death tax in Ontario affected them; and also a thank you to Barry Corbin, who has been working very hard on this issue to bring the light how unfair and punishing this tax actually is.

The fact is this, Mr. Speaker: Taxes in Ontario are too high. This government isn't spending the people's money well, but they think that if they can just get their hands on more of it, then their problems will simply go away. So they bring new taxes and fees or create new expensive audit and verification bureaucracies to make sure every penny of tax is collected, but the truth is this: This strategy is only making things worse in Ontario.

When taxes are lower, economic growth follows. History has shown us that tax cuts create jobs. Letting people keep more money of their own money gives them more choice. It opens up new possibilities. It allows them to invest in their education, start a small business, buy a home or give their children better opportunities. This money flows back into the economy and lifts other people higher up the economic ladder. Lowering taxes also keeps governments accountable by compelling them to spend smarter and actually set priorities. That's exactly what we need in the province of Ontario.

The death tax is a perfect example of overtaxing. It's a tax on assets that the government has already collected a

lifetime of taxes on. Right now, Ontario takes a bigger cut of its people's estates than any other province in Canada. Because of changes made by this Liberal government, grieving families trying to settle the affairs of their loved ones have new, harsh deadlines and the threat of jail time and steep fines hanging over their heads. This crackdown is extremely onerous for grieving families, and it's the wrong direction to be heading in.

This is a deeply unfair tax. The Liberals like to pretend that getting rid of the death tax only helps the rich, but the truth is just the opposite. This is a tax that applies to anyone who has assets worth over \$1,000. The wealthy, who can afford good legal advice, are easily able to avoid this tax. This economic and emotional burden falls disproportionately on the shoulders of the middle- and lower-income classes. It amounts to a tax on a lifetime of hard work and sacrifice. It punishes people who have worked hard for their entire lives to build something from the ground up, whether it's a home, a small business or the family farm.

A person's assets should be kept in the family for their children and their spouse, or for charitable causes that they hold dear. They should not be taxed and then re-taxed by a government that, quite frankly, squanders its revenue.

I hope everyone in the Legislature today will join our PC caucus in supporting our leader's bill, this important piece of legislation to end estate taxes in the province of Ontario once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today in debate, not only to abolish the estate tax, but to congratulate our new leader, Patrick Brown, on his first private member's bill in this assembly, and pick up where my colleague, Mr. McNaughton, the previous speaker, left off, in terms of fighting for fairness for Ontario seniors, small business owners, farmers and families.

Earlier, the member from Peterborough, who is the Minister of Agriculture, tried to blame this tax on a previous Conservative government from the last millennium. That happens from time to time in this place; this is a Liberal government that doesn't want to take any responsibility for its actions.

The government of Mike Harris was forced to bring in a piece of legislation to comply with a previous tax that was brought in by an even earlier government led by Bob Rae, so it became, effectively, an administrative tax. But let me say this, in terms of the estate tax: The first time we actually started talking about a death tax in this chamber was when the Liberal government rushed through, in unprecedented form, the HST. Funeral directors and others were going to have to bring in a new tax that was going to burden those whose family members were recently deceased or were going to be.

Throughout this period of time, we've seen a Liberal government that has not only brought in the single largest sales tax increase in Ontario's history with the HST, but

they brought in the single largest income tax increase in Ontario's history, as well, with a health tax. Now that we have those two taxes, the Liberal government is talking about a land transfer tax, a fuel tax; they're talking about a payroll tax. This is a government that can't get enough taxes. They actually snuck in an eco tax on Canada Day a few years ago. But none is more unfair and insensitive as an increase of the estate tax.

What I found compelling when my leader spoke earlier today were the comparisons with other jurisdictions. In my time, I'd just like to point out that in Ontario an estate valued at \$500,000 would have to pay \$7,250 in tax. If you're in Quebec, that number is \$65. Now, I don't have to tell members here that I come from the nation's capital. Across the river is Quebec, and there is a massive inequity if you're from the city of Ottawa, where I live, compared to the city of Gatineau, which is just across the water.

With that in mind, I encourage all colleagues in this assembly to support PC leader Patrick Brown's bill, and I congratulate him for taking such a strong stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and add some comments to the debate about the Leader of the Opposition's first private member's bill. It's interesting to note that we have been hearing about some of the history today in debate about the member from Kitchener-Waterloo's family and about the Red Fife wheat.

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What is interesting about this bill is that it seeks to scrap legislation brought in 1998 by the party that the Leader of the Opposition now leads. So I just wanted to bring up that historical point of view. Normally, I wouldn't want to stand in the way of someone who wants to undo the Mike Harris legacy. But one thing that really surprises me about this is that it's the Leader of the Opposition's first bill, and I'm wondering why he chose to make this issue his very top priority. I would have thought that there were other important bills that he may have wanted to make his top priority and leave this down on the list.

We've got a lot of issues on the table right now. A lot of people are looking for projects for infrastructure. A lot of people are looking for support on other important pieces of legislation today, so that was just a comment that I wanted to make. I know that we're also looking for pension security, and tackling climate change, so I'm just a little surprised that this would be his top priority.

Ultimately, I know that the constituents in my riding are a little worried that rich heirs and heiresses are the ones who pay most of this tax, but I know that the constituents in my riding are also wanting to make sure that those who are the wealthiest among us don't pay the least amount of tax. They are hoping that they can pay their fair share, and I think that is very important.

Leaving aside some of the discussion of priorities, what I find most telling about the private member's bill

that the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward is that he is gung-ho to forgo the over \$150 million in revenues that is generated by this measure, but he has absolutely no idea how he would offset that revenue loss. This is real money. This is a program whose funds are making a real difference in Ontarians' lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to share my voice on this important private member's bill as well. As our leader, Patrick Brown, said, life under the Liberals has become more and more unaffordable. He detailed how hard-working Ontarians pay a wide variety of taxes throughout their lives. This bill will provide some relief by eliminating the death tax on their assets when they die. I use the expression, Speaker, that in Ontario, we're literally taxed to death.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And after.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: And now we're taxed after death. Thank you for stepping on my line. I appreciate that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're welcome.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Our leader, Patrick Brown, has chosen this topic because we believe that lower taxes are what Ontarians need; that lower taxes create jobs. You heard the deputy leader of the Liberal Party a week ago say to us in the W5 television show, "We're out of money," so we know why the Liberals want to continue to tax us, whether it's property taxes, this new land transfer tax—all of these taxes that our leader shared earlier.

It's all about the fact that, quite frankly, through the scandals—the gas plants scandal, the Ornge scandal, the smart meter scandal—all of those things cost money. And it's not just chump change; these are all billion-dollar scandals. They are out of money. They need every penny they can get. They shake the couches looking for nickels and dimes, and now they're shaking the coffins as well.

On January 1 of this year, changes to Ontario's estate administration tax quietly came into force. I know the other critic has mentioned that as well. It really was done quietly. It was done by regulation. It was done surreptitiously, hoping nobody would notice it. We have noticed it. For about a one-month period, it was the most popular email that I was receiving in my office—people asking about how dare they do this. The "this" that we're talking about is not a tax, as some have erroneously even suggested, that had anything to do with a Conservative government in the past. The Conservative government specifically changed the name of it. The dollar value never changed under the Conservative government, and I defy anybody to look at the Hansard and prove any differently than that.

Quite frankly, I get tired of that. I get tired of digging up material from 20 years ago and trying to blame everything on it. They're out of money. They want to tax you through death now. This is the fact. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has brought a proposal to the table, which I hope receives due consideration today, that says, "Enough is

enough." We'll charge a modest amount to cover the costs, and no more, but not this thousands of dollars that families are going to have to put together to pay this death tax. And they'd better darn well put it together fast because, as you also heard from the NDP critic, you can go to jail if you don't—just what a family needs at a time of grieving.

Earlier today, we proved to this Legislature, through newly revealed documents, yet another tax, this chromite tax. It's all about taxing minerals. This government cannot find enough money to satisfy their hunger to spend. It's tax and spend, tax and spend, and now they're taxing you after you're dead. We encourage everybody in this Legislature to stand up for people in Ontario today and support our leader Patrick Brown's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Apparently we're debating who is responsible for this tax. This is a joke, Mr. Speaker, because we know they introduced it, but let's just go with the Tory fiction line. So they renamed it; they were in power for a decade and this was such a crushing issue, the only thing they could do was rename it.

We built an amazing province in Ontario. This country is the most remarkable place—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: To the selfish partisan folks over there, when I said "we," I meant that all of us, for generations in Ontario, have built an amazing province.

We raised a lot of taxes in the 1930s and 1940s. The reason that we did is that we had to fight a world war. Tax levels, from 1939 through the 1940s, went way up. Income tax came in. We fought a war. Because people here built hospitals, paid for a war machine, built almost all of our subways, all of our highways, in the vast majority—about 80% of our infrastructure was built in this country on the repurposing of taxes that were raised to fight the Second World War. If you go through most of our public buildings and assets, you will see they were built in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

From the 1970s on, we took infrastructure budgets that were the equivalent in today's dollars of about \$15 billion and dropped them to \$1 billion. The previous government downloaded health and social services onto mayors and councillors. I know, because I was the mayor of Winnipeg at the time, and we had just done the gas tax deal with the federal government, which amounted to nada in Ontario, because my friend Bob Chiarelli and my friend Mel Lastman were burying the multi-hundred-million-dollar budgets—one download to the city of Toronto health and social services would have been a 10% tax increase. They eviscerated that.

I did my mom's taxes. I do them; she's 87 years old. She keeps my father's taxes from the 1960s, just when health care came on. You should go back and do that. Go back and look at that. Do you know we make a good living in this country? We don't need to raise taxes anymore; we really don't. But my generation inherited this

country from people who went and died by the millions in Europe for our freedom, and people at home raised taxes in force.

The Tories today constantly lose elections because they think everybody in this country is a taxpayer. They have forgotten that they were citizens, soldiers, doctors and nurses, and the hospitals that your mother and your grandmother paid for are the reason you've got good health care.

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As my baba used to say to me, Mr. Speaker, "Living in this country, where you have courts, a democracy and a fair tax system is what we came here for: civil liberties and freedom."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member from Nipissing and the Minister of the Environment to please come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to please come to order.

The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I appreciate all the debate on this bill.

First of all, I'd like to ask all members in the House: Don't simply vote based on what your whip may have said or what political party this idea comes from. Think about your constituents. Think about fairness. There is no monopoly on a good idea, and it is a good idea to make sure we don't tax people at their death. It is a good idea to make sure Ontario doesn't have the highest death taxes in Canada.

The member for Toronto Centre was talking about how taxes are good, and I appreciated his passionate speech for why we need more taxes, but I know he comes from Manitoba. If you live in Manitoba, you actually have affordable death taxes. What I don't think is appropriate is that it's night and day, the difference on taxation at death in Ontario as compared to every other province.

When I launched this private member's bill, I had a website, stopdeathtax.ca to build public support. I can tell you, thousands and thousands of people signed at stopdeathtax.ca, because they're frustrated. Every MPP's inbox is filled with complaints about this death tax. So this is an opportunity to do the right thing.

Despite Liberal philosophy that taxes are the solution to all problems, there actually is a belief that is growing in support across this province that we can have tax relief. It's a concept that's difficult to understand for the government benches, but people aspire to tax relief. Given hydro rates that are the highest in the province, given their support for this new pension tax, given their history of 12 years of new taxes every single year, maybe just once you can do the right thing and provide tax relief for people when they die. As the MPP from Nipissing so ably put it, don't shake down people in their coffins.

I appreciate your consideration.

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL
SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(PAROLE), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS
(LIBÉRATION CONDITIONNELLES)

Mr. Yakabuski moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act in respect of parole / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne les libérations conditionnelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order number 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wish that I wasn't here today under these circumstances. I would rather not be doing this. I am only doing it as a result of a tragedy that took place, mostly in my riding, on September 22.

September 22 started out as a beautiful day. We were all down—or up, whatever you want to say—at the International Plowing Match in Finch when the news broke that a body had been discovered in my riding: A woman had been murdered.

As the day went on, the news became much, much worse. As the final news was in, we were made aware that three women had been murdered in my riding on that terrible day, September 22.

We found out that Anastasia Kuzyk, aged 36; Nathalie Warmerdam, aged 48; and Carol Culleton, aged 66, were all murdered, allegedly, by Basil Borutski. The news filled the air over the next several days, as did people's feelings about how this could happen. How could this happen here in Renfrew county, where we believe sometimes that we're immune to these kinds of events?

What we learned afterwards is what makes us question, perhaps, how well the system works. That is what in many ways has precipitated my bringing forth this private member's bill today. What we learned in the aftermath was that Mr. Borutski had a history of violence, not only with at least two of these women, but with his ex-wife, as well. He had been in brushes with the law due to domestic violence since the mid-1990s; and on more than one occasion, as part of those proceedings through the court system, some of those charges were bargained away as if they didn't really happen; they were stayed, so the convictions were of a less egregious nature than they might have otherwise been, if the full record had been clearly delineated.

That Friday night, my wife and I attended a vigil in Wilno, which would be closest to the home of Anastasia Kuzyk, who was also a real estate agent, like my wife. They'd had dealings on a periodic basis over the years, as normally you would have, one real estate agent to another. Of course, Anastasia was tremendously well respected in that field. She also worked part-time as a

server at the Wilno Tavern, and was extremely popular there as well.

Right across the road from the Wilno tavern, at Wilno Heritage Park, was where the vigil was held. I would say, Speaker, that there were about 700 people in attendance that night. It was a wonderfully done ceremony, tremendously emotional, and not done with an emotion of revenge or anything else; it was about supporting the families of the victims, but also each one of us examining ourselves as to what we could do to make victims of domestic violence safer in their own homes at a time when the perpetrator would be released.

That is something that came back to me over and over again in the riding as I would speak to people over the next several weekends. We were sitting, so when I would go home on the weekends, I would hear about that an awful lot. There was a tremendous amount of news coverage—not only in the local papers, but in major papers like the Ottawa Citizen and the Ottawa Sun, as well—because this was a shocking event for people in my riding.

What I decided I could do—and I don't pretend for a minute, Speaker, to be able to solve this problem, or to fix the problem, or to prevent things from ever happening again, but I did ask myself: What would be a reasonable first step? I want to be very clear: This is not an indictment of the government. This is not an indictment of members of the cabinet. It is simply an opportunity for us to all ask ourselves if there is something we could do that would actually make this province safer for victims of domestic violence.

I'm not going to go into the long history of Mr. Borutski too greatly, because I don't have that much time, but as I said, it was extensive. That in itself goes back to his ex-wife; the first time there were breaches was in the mid-1990s. That history continued until, obviously, September 22. But he had recently been released. And here is the nub of the matter: When he was released, Mr. Borutski refused to sign the parole order that is presented to every person who is eligible for parole, that they're expected to sign. He refused to sign it. Critics will say that the terms of the order are valid whether the parolee signs it or not. But like a lot of people, I believe that if you accept that you have wronged, if you believe that you have paid part of that debt but that you accept that you breached the law and you injured someone else and did harm to them, then you would have no problem signing those papers. That is part of the rehabilitation process, and maybe the first part other than the incarceration. When he chose not to sign those, that in itself was a statement that he did not feel the remorse and did not feel the guilt he should have felt. That should have raised a red flag. I know critics will say, "That's not a big deal." Well, maybe it should be a big deal. That's part of what this bill is all about: If a person eligible for parole, upon their release, will not sign those papers, they will not be released. As I said, this is not a cure-all, but it is a step in the right direction.

1450

There's one other component to this bill, and I'll get to that.

The other issue—and I know some of my colleagues and hopefully people in the other parties here today will speak to it as well: As I say, there are many, many facets about how we can make victims of domestic violence or sexual domestic violence safer. I'm only going to address some of them today. There are issues that we do need to talk about.

The probation officers in Renfrew county—to our knowledge, there is one. That's insufficient. With the workload they have, they cannot spend enough time monitoring the offenders who should be monitored the most.

I think we need a graduated system where, if someone is released and there's a determination that they are a very, very low risk, they shouldn't see their parole officer very often; but if someone has a record that goes back 20 years, then they should be seeing that parole officer on a much more frequent basis. If nothing else, it is a statement to that paroled: "We are monitoring you. We are watching you. We are interacting with you. We need feedback from you on how you're reintegrating back into society and how it's affecting you."

A well-trained probation officer can read between the lines and can see in a person's eyes—if they have those personal, face-to-face interactions, they have a better sense of how that person is dealing with the challenges of reintegrating into society. So we need to address that. My bill does not address that. But those are all part of the things that we're hoping that—as a result of this, we as a unit here, as a group, begin to talk, begin to sit down and say, "Are there some things we could do as a government?"

I've had some feedback, as well, that we lack enough proper supports to support women who are in abusive relationships, to allow them to exit them with a feeling of comfort and safety, knowing there's a place to go before it goes too far. I'm not here to judge. I'm not the jury. But in the case of Mr. Borutski's first wife, Mary Ann, if she had had the proper supports or felt she did have the supports earlier, we may have seen this pattern from Mr. Borutski a lot earlier and maybe more could have been done about it.

I can't speak to the past. I'm only talking about what we can do in the future.

The other component of my bill is that upon a person's release, if they've been deemed a violent offender in a case of domestic violence or sexual domestic violence, unless the board feels that this person is no longer a risk, does not pose a risk to their victim—unless they make that determination, then that person will be subject to electronic surveillance as well. I do not prescribe in the bill the details of that. That's not my job. We have bureaucrats that can do that. We leave that to the government to do as regulation for the length of time, and that's where I think all of those things, through regulation and through the parole system, can be determined much

better than I can do it by defining it in a piece of legislation.

But these two steps, I believe, will help to ensure that we will not see, hopefully, a repeat of the deaths of Anastasia, Nathalie and Carol. I cannot say that I guarantee that, but what I hope is—if my bill passes today, I'll be very thankful of that, but at the very least, if it encourages this government to act upon its own—I believe they are more capable of acting in a comprehensive way and taking into consideration everything that needs to be considered. They will do a better job than I can of drafting a piece of legislation. I understand that; I accept that. I would be more than happy to support any piece of legislation that accomplishes what we're trying to do here today and makes victims of domestic violence safer upon the release of the perpetrator of that crime.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I want to thank the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for bringing this bill forward. It has been motivated by a concern for the continuing problem of violence against women—a very real problem in our communities—and I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

The bill does two things: It requires an inmate to sign their certificate of parole as a condition of their release, and it provides for the use of electronic monitoring of a person on parole who committed sexual or domestic violence, unless they do not pose a threat to their victim.

I do not want to diminish in any way what the member has brought forward because any opportunity that we have to do something—anything—to tackle the horrendous problems too many women face, we should grasp onto with both hands. Any forum we can use to talk about this should be exploited.

I know that the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke appreciates that violence against women is a complicated, ongoing problem in our society that requires much more thought, debate, consultation and action than can be accomplished in a single private member's bill, just as the member has actually said. Violence against women and girls is seen in all continents, countries and cultures. It happens at every age and in every income group. No group is safe, and the prevalence of it requires constant inquiry, education and action.

Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. Every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. Each year, even though 80% of incidents go unreported to police, there are still over 40,000 arrests made relating to domestic violence.

I'm sure, as MPPs, we are all aware of the pressures on shelters for abused women in our communities due to underfunding. Just this week, I attended a fundraiser for the Good Shepherd's Mary's Place, one of Hamilton's shelters. I heard over and over about the number of women who had to be turned away due to the lack of beds. That's a problem we hear from every corner of this province.

As I noted earlier, women in all societal groups are victims of violence at alarming rates, but there are some groups who are at particular risk; for example, aboriginal women in Canada are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as a result of violence.

The majority of voters in this last recent federal election voted for parties that supported an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. I hope we can count on our provincial government to make sure that their friends in Ottawa fulfill that commitment to do that. Meanwhile, in Hamilton, Honouring the Circle, operated by the Native Women's Centre to offer transitional housing and support based on aboriginal principles, has closed its doors due to the lack of funding.

As I said at the start, I welcome the opportunity to speak about this and highlight the issue whenever possible.

For the bill itself, I would like to see it at committee for more input and possible amendments. I see no issues with a requirement that an inmate sign their certificate of parole, but I would like to hear more discussion about how best to monitor people on parole who pose a threat. While electronic monitoring is a useful tool, parole officers have, for some time, called for more resources for front-line and on-site inspections.

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So this bill is supportable, as far as it goes. Again, I would like to thank the member for bringing it forward. But this government really needs to take some serious steps. We need to increase our commitment to prevention, we must adequately fund education and counselling programs that ensure that men are held accountable for changing their behaviour, and we need to ensure that the availability of support services for women experiencing violence are there for them.

I appreciate the time to add my two cents to this bill and congratulate the member for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak about Bill 130, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act in respect of parole. In doing so, I want to thank the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for tabling his private member's bill on this very important issue. I share his concerns and support the general intent of Bill 130.

On a personal note, as a former resident of the Ottawa Valley, my late husband was an OPP officer in the Killaloe detachment. Having spoken to some of them, subsequent to September 22, on that terrible day, I send my condolences not only to the family and friends of the family members but also to the officers who were involved. I know, as the member opposite understands, how difficult this has been for them too. They live in the Valley. They know and protect the people who live there. They are neighbours. So my thoughts are with them as well.

One of the most important priorities of our government is the safety and security of Ontarians. That is why

we appreciate the member opposite making these suggestions, and we're always interested in discussing ways in which we can build stronger and safer communities across Ontario. As members of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, as a matter of fact, members on all sides of this House are doing exactly that.

Because everyone has the right to feel safe in their homes and communities, we take the supervision of offenders in the community very seriously. When it comes to supervising offenders in the community, our priority is to assure that we have the appropriate level of supervision to support rehabilitation and, above all, to ensure that our communities are safe. That is why our probation and parole officers, who are among the finest in the world, work hard every day to supervise offenders and hold them accountable.

Indeed, the safety of our communities is paramount when making supervision decisions. Over the past couple of years, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has made important progress on a number of areas related to community corrections. This includes things like focusing offender programs and resources on medium- to high-risk offenders and increasing training for probation and parole officers, with a specific focus on domestic violence and sexual offender supervision. But we recognize that there is always more progress that can be made, in terms of keeping our communities safe.

If you'll permit me, two important points in closing: Specifically related to the bill before us today, to address the members' proposals to make greater use of electronic supervision technology, the Ontario Parole Board already possesses the discretion to order electronic monitoring as a condition of parole, based on an assessment of the offender's risk profile. And importantly, there already exists a legislative requirement that an inmate can be required to sign a certificate of parole unless there are compelling or exceptional circumstances, such as a disability, that can prevent their signing.

In closing, more work needs to be done to better understand how Bill 130 can improve the safety and security of our community. Still, I welcome the opportunity to debate it. I thank the member again for raising this important issue, and I look forward to the continued debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to add my support to Bill 130, brought forward by my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. We all saw how much he cares about this issue during his opening remarks. This is an incredibly emotional issue for all of his constituents, for all of us here in Legislature and throughout the province.

As a husband, a father and a grandfather, the tragic news out of Wilno struck me deeply. I cannot begin to imagine what the families and friends of those victims are actually going through. The entire ordeal has raised many questions about whether gaps in the system contributed to this tragedy, if it could have been avoided,

and how the justice system could have done a better job to protect these three women. The fact that the suspect in the Wilno murders was known to women's shelters and police, coupled with his long history of domestic violence, has led many to ask why red flags weren't noticed.

Carl Bromwich, chair of the community policing advisory committee for the five townships in Renfrew region, argued that the single probation officer who visits the area weekly is overworked. Additionally, he believes that other services that are aimed at preventing such violence are underfunded. As the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke noted, rehabilitation is the ultimate goal. That is why the province's underfunding of mental health services and understaffing of parole offices is so tragic.

While it may not be possible to completely eradicate domestic violence and other despicable acts, any efforts that can increase the safety of the public should be, in fact, supported. We firmly believe that parolees must demonstrate that they are willing to reintegrate into society after they have served their time. They must agree to follow the law before they're released back into our communities.

As it stands today, inmates can actually be released and granted parole even if he or she has refused to sign their certificate of parole. This was the case for the suspect in the Wilno murders. He refused to sign an order to stay away from and not communicate with one of his victims before he was released from a 19-month sentence for assaulting her. Many Ontarians are, in fact, shocked to learn of this gap in the system. It is simply common sense to require parolees to sign these certificates.

This bill will give peace of mind to victims when their attacker is released on parole. Victims of sexual or domestic violence often serve a sentence much longer than their attackers, and their sense of security can be taken away from them for the rest of their lives. They have a right to feel safe. Electronic monitoring will help give them peace of mind, and that is incredibly important. Additionally, it will help the province determine whether or not parolees are observing the terms of their release.

This bill serves to continue the conversation about how best to protect the public from these extreme acts of violence. This is what the bill serves to do. This issue requires a lot more discussion than one afternoon in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, but this is certainly a start. This bill will make a difference, and that is worth supporting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's my pleasure to rise as women's issues critic for the NDP caucus to offer some thoughts on Bill 130, the private member's bill brought forward by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. First off, I want to commend the member for his obvious concern and his commitment to this issue. I think we all heard the pain that he expressed and his grief at the horrific murders last month of Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton. These

homicides occurred in his riding and have motivated him to bring this bill forward.

I also want to acknowledge that in May of this year, the member attended the Ottawa meeting of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, and there he, along with the other members of the committee, heard directly from the Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County about some of the unique barriers and challenges that face women in small and rural communities. We heard about the geographical remoteness in an area that's as large as PEI that makes violence and abuse more easily hidden. We heard about community norms that make it even more difficult for rural women to come forward and seek help. We heard about lack of access to transportation, fewer opportunities for employment, lack of child care, and high levels of poverty, all of which force women to stay in abusive relationships. Finally, we heard about access to weapons, as well as numerous situations where the judiciary allows the return of weapons to offenders because it is hunting season.

I know that this legislation comes from a good place, and it is attempting to address one of the most pernicious public policy problems plaguing governments worldwide, and that is how to end men's violence against women and keep women safe. Unfortunately, however, it is uncertain whether the provisions set out in Bill 130 could have prevented the murders in Renfrew county. It is also questionable how much impact they will have in ensuring the safety of women and children in the future.

Bill 130 amends the Ministry of Correctional Services Act to allow for the electronic monitoring of sexual violence and domestic violence offenders as a condition of parole when they are considered to pose a safety risk to the victims. It also requires offenders to sign a certificate of parole acknowledging the conditions under which the parole is granted.

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The first amendment certainly is consistent with a recommendation that we heard from the Hadley inquest, the inquest that was established to review the domestic homicide of Gillian Hadley. In that recommendation brought forward in the 2002 report of the inquest, it was specified that electronic monitoring technology be used both for parole and also for bail, and that it involve a GPS system to best capture the whereabouts of the offender.

What we know from parole officers is that electronic monitoring in and of itself is not enough. There is also information that needs to be understood and released to parole officers related to the circumstances of the parole.

We also know that there is a need for more resources for front-line, on-site inspections so that parole officers can regularly check in to monitor the whereabouts of the parolee. JoAnne Brooks, the director of the Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County, has pointed to the fact that Renfrew needs better funding so that probation officers can meet with offenders on a regular, if not daily, basis during their reintegration into the community.

Ms. Brooks also pointed out the difficulty of implementing a monitoring program when you have such a

very large rural area as Renfrew county, which is under-resourced in both policing and in community services.

Earlier this year, we learned that the local OPP domestic violence program is being phased out in Renfrew and other areas of the province, which has raised very real concerns about the impact of this phase-out on coordination across the county and on survivors. There is concern among violence-against-women advocates that this may be part of a larger trend.

I want to read from the 2015 summer newsletter of Building a Bigger Wave, a provincial network of violence against women coordinating committees. They say that at the southwest region table, a discussion took place in light of the Renfrew OPP situation. Disturbingly, a few months ago, a Toronto Ministry of the Attorney General corporate manager who oversaw domestic-violence-related programs said in a meeting with transfer payment agencies that they should prepare themselves for program and funding changes, as domestic violence is no longer the shiny object for this government.

If this is true and there is a decreased political commitment to ending domestic violence, then we are unlikely to see the implementation of evidence-based measures that could actually make a difference. What those measures are are effective systems for threat assessment and risk management.

The 2009 report of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council describes in detail what is necessary to be included in an effective risk management and threat assessment system. These kinds of measures have been recommended in every single Domestic Violence Death Review Committee report since that committee was first established in 2003. About a third of the hundreds of recommendations that have been made by the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee are specific to threat assessment and risk management.

The 2009 report indicates that the initiatives that have been introduced around threat assessment and risk management have been isolated, fragmented and inconsistent. This is a real concern when we're looking at ending violence against women and keeping women safe.

One of the benefits of threat assessment is that it can lead to better risk management. It can assist in developing more realistic safety plans, it can identify appropriate perpetrator treatment programs, and it can help the criminal justice system identify which offenders need closer supervision. Instead of a systematic, coordinated approach to risk management and perpetrator treatment, we have seen from this government a one-size-fits-all intervention model that does not differentiate between high-risk offenders and low- to moderate-risk offenders. It does not provide treatment for men who voluntarily want to change.

Without this coordinated system of threat assessment and risk measurement, the measures set out in Bill 130 will have only minimal impact. I encourage the government to look at the 2009 report and to look at these measures in Bill 130 in terms of that larger context.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I now recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We usually say we're pleased to talk about a bill, and I am, but I guess what I want to do first is thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for bringing this forward. I really appreciate, too, how he's brought this forward in a very non-partisan way with respect to a very serious issue. I think the more we can talk in this House about domestic violence and sexual violence, the better we are and the better Ontarians we'll be.

I think it's also important to acknowledge that both of my critics on the women's file are here today—thank you for being here—and a number of members from the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment are here. While I know their mandated focus is sexual violence, I also know that they've heard first-hand from many députés and others about domestic violence. We all know, Speaker, that sexual violence and domestic violence are often intertwined.

I want to use my time to talk a little bit about what has been going on in Ontario with respect to supporting victims of domestic violence, who are usually women, but sometimes they're men as well. Some of those initiatives include programs like the Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign, which is reaching out to communities across the province, including francophones, aboriginals, immigrants and refugee communities.

There's also training for more than 34,000 front-line professionals and service providers to recognize signs of domestic violence and to learn how to support victims effectively. The member talked about that in the opening remarks for this bill. I think helping to support victims is a very important piece of this complicated puzzle.

I also want to mention the Employment Training for Abused/At-Risk Women Program, which provides women with specialized supports and services to help increase employability and income earning.

We also have a Language Interpreter Services Program, which helps victims of violence, including human trafficking, who face language barriers or who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to allow them to access services. We're investing over \$9 million in this program over the next three years so that all women, regardless of the language they speak, are able to access supportive services without facing barriers.

I've talked at length in this House about our sexual violence and harassment action plan. We established earlier this year a permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women. It's not just sexual violence; it's all forms of violence against women. There are many experts on that panel giving us advice on our violence-against-women programming to support the work to combat sexual violence, harassment and domestic violence. This is, of course, very valuable feedback to us and actually informed the legislation that I introduced just last week coming out of the action plan.

A couple of things in terms of support for victims: I want to mention that the sexual violence and harassment action plan, if passed, would amend the Limitations Act and the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act. What is proposed there is the elimination of the limitations period for all sexual assault actions to encourage more survivors of sexual assault to come forward with their cases, regardless of how long it's been since that incident occurred.

We're also proposing changes to the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act to eliminate the current two-year limitation period for victims of sexual or domestic violence to be able to apply for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

These are very important changes, because we know that, sometimes, survivors don't feel comfortable coming forward about assaults immediately, so allowing more time, I believe, is the right thing to do. If passed, that will allow civil processes to move forward quickly.

I would say that this is a very important conversation that we're having here today. We're having important conversations at the all-party select committee looking at sexual violence and harassment—and, I would suggest, domestic violence.

1520

The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is doing something very important here, bringing this discussion forward. I don't know if he knows that I am also responsible for youth justice in this province. As the Minister of Children and Youth Services, all the youth justice facilities fall under my ministry, as well. In fact, that probably takes up about half of my budget. So I'm looking at the bill he's bringing forward and what else we can do, not just on the correctional ministry side, but on the youth justice side. We obviously want young people who are incarcerated to have productive lives when they come out of the system, and to make sure that they get the right kind of supports and become responsible adults as they move through the system.

Again, I thank the member for bringing this very important PMB forward, and I look forward to the continuing discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke in support of his private member's bill. There's little doubt that there is not an easy fix for this issue. We all have terrible stories that come out of our own ridings, our own communities. I really applaud the member because he has taken a terribly tragic event and he's trying to bring forward a very detailed, specific idea that we can all embrace. So I give him a lot of credit for that. We've talked a lot in this Legislature about electronic monitoring, and there are always the "yes-but"s" that come with it: "Yes, but the cause." "Yes, but how do we ensure, depending on where people move throughout the province?" The fact is that he has brought it forward and said, "Let's study it. Let's get this idea on

the table so that we can look at how to make lives better, primarily for women who are being targeted, abused and, ultimately, in this case, tragically killed by individuals who feel they have some sort of power over them."

There are two very specific ideas that he has brought forward. The electronic monitoring: In this day and age of digitalizing and opportunities—I think we can do a better job. The other is signing the certificate of parole. When news came out that to be eligible for parole, you did not have to sign off on the statements of what you would maintain under your parole; when it came forward that you in fact did not have to sign that certificate, I was shocked and appalled, like many people I spoke to in my community.

When you put your name to a document, you are in effect saying, "I understand my roles and responsibilities, and I will adhere to it." The mere fact that this individual did not sign his parole certificate—none of us were in the room, but some of the anecdotal information was that he was quite agitated when that parole certificate was put in front of him and made it quite clear that he had no intention of signing it. I think the fact that we didn't know, as individual Ontario residents, that you don't have to sign it in order to get to the other side of the gate, so to speak, speaks to the transparency that we could do a better job of.

I just want to say that these are two very basic, very easy fixes. We're not going to fix the world with this amendment. It's not going to change the world, but it will be an acknowledgement that we understand that we can do better. I can't imagine that there is anyone in this chamber who doesn't believe that we can't do a better job in the protection of vulnerable citizens, particularly ones who are being targeted by former spouses or individuals they had relationships with.

Again, I just want to congratulate you. Well done, and really very easily understandable suggestions. The closer we get to December 6 and the national day of remembrance, I think this is an opportunity where we can actually bring forward and say that as legislators, as MPPs, we're not just going to those ceremonies and taking part in the remembrance; we're participating in how to make it better. So, kudos to you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I appreciate the opportunity to rise, on behalf of the constituents in Cambridge, to add a few comments to today's debate on Bill 130, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act in respect of parole.

Speaker, before I get started, I really wanted to express my condolences to the family, friends and communities where the terrible events took place. It's important to note that I'm unable to speak about any specific incidents or cases, and my remarks should not be taken as such.

I know that we on this side of the House, and indeed all of us in the House, feel that one of the most important priorities of our government is the safety and security of

every Ontarian. I for one, and I know many in this House, welcome the member's suggestions. I thank the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for his suggestions and the bill he has brought forward today.

We also recognize that there is more that we can be doing, more progress that can be made to keep our communities safe. That's why our Premier has championed a sexual violence and harassment action plan. As you well know, this is a package of initiatives to raise awareness of sexual violence and harassment; enhance prevention initiatives to combat sexual discrimination, harassment and violence; and strengthen services and supports for victims.

In fact, we in this House who are sitting as members of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment are working very hard right now on our final report writing. We're hoping to deliver that report to add some more recommendations on this very important subject before the end of this legislative sitting.

I did want to point out that there already exists a legislated requirement that an inmate be required to sign the certificate of parole unless there are compelling or exceptional circumstances, such as a disability, that could prevent their signing. Indeed, it's also really important—and I really underscore this point—to note that both probation orders and parole conditions are enforceable, regardless of whether they've been signed or not. I want to repeat that: It's important to note that both probation orders and parole conditions are enforceable, regardless of whether they've been signed or not.

But I also agree that more needs to be done to better understand how this bill can improve the safety and security of our communities. I just want to close by saying that I support this bill moving forward, getting it into committee and trying to ensure that all Ontarians are safe in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate? The member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You did a fine job on that.

I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 130, brought forward by my colleague the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. He made a very emotional presentation on the tragedy that happened in his riding and his actions, being this bill, toward hopefully being taken in by the government and changes made to protect any vulnerable women, not just in his riding but of course across the province of Ontario.

I've spoken many times in the Legislature on this specific tragedy that happened in Renfrew county, and I've actually questioned the government and made recommendations on some changes that we think need to happen to protect victims of domestic and sexual violence. This bill does make some more recommendations that we'd like to see brought in to protect the victims, and hopefully survivors, of some of the abuse that does go on out there.

Ensuring that offenders sign their parole certifications and enhanced monitoring of offenders will protect the most vulnerable among us. In cases of sexual violence or domestic violence where the victims are often members of the most vulnerable groups of people, it is necessary that the victims feel safe in their own communities. I often say that no one should fear staying in their own homes. That's a terrible way to live.

1530

In rural ridings, we are especially vulnerable because of the geographic distance of not only the homes around us, but police forces and the time of reaction to such instances.

The case of Mr. Borutski I have spoken to many times in the Legislature—and the tragedies of the women. Unfortunately, he's not the only case that reveals the need for closer monitoring of offenders in incidences such as what occurred. In 1996, we had Arlene May's incident, where the offender had a history of criminal convictions that ranged from breach of probation to weapons offence. It was proved that Mr. Iles was a dangerous man. He was released on condition that he leave the jurisdiction within which the victim, Arlene, was residing at that time. Yet the coordinated services didn't work—record-sharing between police, lack of monitoring. He travelled across the jurisdictions freely and murdered Arlene May.

These cases have been going on, unfortunately, and we should not tolerate this any further. We need to properly monitor these offenders, especially the high-risk offenders. I've mentioned many times in the Legislature about the use of high-risk tools so these people are not released, for example, without signing the conditions of parole or probation. Red flags should go off everywhere. I asked most recently that a system be in place where crown attorneys are notified if a person does not sign those conditions on their release. This has been brought up in Auditors General reports many, many times. The rate of recidivism for high-risk offenders is so high, at 42% to 60%, that we should not be surprised at these numbers.

The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has brought forward a bill that, from the sound of it, the government is supporting or will at least look into it and go to committee. There are many more recommendations that we have heard both in our select committee—I'm a member of the select committee—and from our own communities and the service providers that are out there.

I'm very honoured to be able to take part and certainly positively recommend that the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke's bill come forward and be passed in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Thanks to all members who participated in the debate.

The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has two minutes for his response.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I won't name all the members—there are many—but I do want to thank them for their contributions today.

I want to address a couple of the things that were brought forth by some of the members. I agree: This is not a fix-all. It was never intended to be. There is so much more work to be done and it would have to be done in a more comprehensive way.

The one that we all agree on is that domestic violence is wrong all the time. Whether we agree on every part of this bill or not, violence is wrong all the time. We have a lot of work to do about how we go about fixing that.

The scope—and I want to address the government members—there are some things that are in legislation. This bill will make them stronger and more enforceable.

As I say, I want to remind you that the scope of this legislation is fairly narrow. We are not trying to fix everything, but I do say to the comments, “Would this have prevented those crimes?”, we don’t know that. I agree; we don’t know that. But if Mr. Borutski had been monitored, there would have been a much better chance that police would have known about his whereabouts much sooner. They would have been able to respond not in a reactive way, but hopefully in a proactive way, if he had gone where he was forbidden to go.

We don’t know that because we cannot turn back the clock. But had he been monitored, I do believe that there would have been a better chance that we would not have lost these three ladies that day.

As I said, this is a start. This is a beginning. I hope it serves as a catalyst for the government, on their side, in their deliberations, to come up with a more comprehensive piece of legislation that, in a more detailed and significant way, protects not only women from suffering violence, but also, when they do, if their perpetrator is released, prevents them from being revictimized.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

GROWING ONTARIO'S CRAFT CIDER INDUSTRY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA CROISSANCE DE L'INDUSTRIE DU CIDRE ARTISANAL DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill: Bill 110, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act / Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise today to debate my private member's bill, Bill 110, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act.

I want to start off by thanking the member from Beaches–East York for co-sponsoring this important piece of legislation, and I will be sharing my time with him. When there is a good idea that helps Ontarians and

grows businesses, we can come together and work together on issues. So I do want to thank the member for co-sponsoring this private member's bill that will help Ontario craft ciders and apple growers across Ontario.

I also want to welcome the members of the Ontario Craft Cider Association and the Ontario Apple Growers. I'm going to do a list, but I'm going to do your business, because I think that will help you more: Brickworks Ciderhouse, Coffin Ridge cider, County Cider, Duxbury Cider Co., KW Craft Cider, Ontario Apple Growers, Pommies Cider Co., Revel Cider, Shiny Apple Cider, Spirit Tree cidery, Sunnybrook Farm Winery, Thornbury premium cidery, West Avenue Cider, and, from Ontario Restaurant News, Kristen Smith. Thank you for joining us.

Many of us have used that phrase, “All politics is local.” The idea for Bill 110 was as a result of meetings that I held in my riding with two local cideries in Dufferin–Caledon: Tom Wilson from Spirit Tree cidery, from their beautiful straw building on Boston Mills Road; and Lindsay and Nick Sutcliffe, from Southern Cliff Brands, known for their Pommies and Farmhouse. This is for you, gentlemen.

I met them when they were starting their new businesses in Dufferin–Caledon. They explained to me the successes and challenges they were facing within the cider industry. The more we talked, the more we saw an opportunity to work together to help this industry by legislation.

I believe our private members' bill will encourage the further growth of Ontario's craft cidery industry. Bill 110 will give this industry the support it needs and show that there are people at Queen's Park who want to see this industry grow.

I want to highlight an important difference between Ontario craft cider and other ciders sold through the LCBO, and why it's so important for us to focus on Ontario craft ciders. They only use Ontario-grown fruit, so we're not just talking about producers; we're talking about growers, and we should be very proud of this. This is an industry that is supporting other industries across Ontario, including Ontario's agricultural sector.

The Ontario Apple Growers know this and therefore are supporting Bill 110. In a letter of support from the Ontario Apple Growers, they state: “The Ontario Apple Growers is providing this letter to voice our full support for Bill 110.”

They represent 235 commercial apple farmers in Ontario who grow apples for the fresh and processing markets.

“Each year, the Ontario apple sector grows approximately 294 million pounds of apples, with a considerable volume of apples going to the processing channels.

“In 2010, as part of the Ontario government's funding of a 15-year strategy for the tree-fruit industry, developing a robust processing sector for the higher-end and niche segments was identified as a strategic direction. Craft cider definitely falls into this area, and the

Ontario Apple Growers are optimistic about the opportunities that are presenting themselves with the growth of the craft cider industry in Ontario. Ontario craft cider companies source the apples they use to make their cider exclusively from members of the OAG.”

That, of course, is a letter of support from the OAG. Thank you.

I want to spend a little bit of my time discussing the potential of this exciting industry, which deserves support from all of us.

1540

Ontario craft cider is indeed rapidly expanding. In 2008, there was only one craft cider producer in all of Ontario. Now there are some 22 cideries across the province. These cideries are located all across Ontario, but it’s important to highlight how important these cideries are to local communities, especially in our province’s rural communities. Not only has the number of cideries rapidly grown in such a short amount of time, but the sales of Ontario craft cider have grown just as quickly.

From 2009 to 2014, sales grew 284% at the LCBO. That is astounding. Recently, the sales of craft cider at the LCBO nearly doubled, to \$4 million. Even though sales of Ontario craft cider are growing exponentially, the majority of cider sold in the LCBO is from outside Ontario and Canada. A very important disadvantage the Ontario craft cider industry faces is the very high markup it pays to the LCBO, whereas, as a comparator, the Ontario Craft Brewers negotiated with the Ministry of Finance to pay a lower tax rate because they produce in such small quantities.

I want to read out an email I received from a concerned individual who would love to start his own cider business, but explains how detrimental the markup fees are to the Ontario craft cider industry: “The markup fees are detrimental to a small start-up like myself, and having the support of our government behind any start-up is essential for the survival of its first years. The bill will allow us to grow from a start-up to a business that hires, that promotes Ontario products across the country and hopefully parts of the USA, and that is a contributor to Ontario’s revenue.”

I want to commend this individual for wanting to start his own business. I know it takes courage to start your own business, especially in an industry that is in its infancy. We should be supporting our craft cider industry instead of hindering their growth.

That is why I brought forward Bill 110, the Growing Ontario’s Craft Cider Industry Act. Bill 110 will ensure that the markup or tax imposed on Ontario cider does not exceed the markup or tax currently in place with Ontario craft beer. Effectively, Ontario craft cider and beer will be placed on an equal footing. Both industries are important to Ontario’s economy, and the Ontario Craft Brewers recognize this.

In a letter of support from the Ontario Craft Brewers to the Premier, they state, “We are writing today to show

our support for the Ontario Craft Cider Association and ask that you join us by backing Bill 110, the Growing Ontario’s Craft Cider Industry Act. Like the craft brewers, Ontario craft cideries strive to produce quality local products. They create jobs in both rural and urban centres, build communities and keep alcohol profits in our province.

“The OCCA has a commitment to use only 100% Ontario apples and pears that will invest heavily in rural infrastructure. Ontario Craft Brewers share the Ontario Craft Cider Association’s commitment to crafting the highest-quality drinks and making Ontario a continental leader in craft beverages. Our members already invest with the cideries at many events across the province, and we look forward to collaborating with them for many years to come.” That, again, is from the Ontario Craft Brewers.”

The Ontario craft cider industry has the potential to make a meaningful impact on multiple Ontario industries and to the overall finances of our province, but we will never tap into that potential without first providing the right incentives to this industry. Bill 110 is a start to showing support for this industry. I ask everyone to support this important beginning so that our province can enjoy the fruits of this homegrown industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I now recognize the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Let me start by thanking the member from Dufferin—Caledon for her initiative in taking on this excellent local initiative.

The reality is that it’s a local issue for people right across this province. Apples are growing in all sectors of Ontario. It’s one of the largest areas, and we grow great apples for cider production. So thank you very much for taking on this initiative.

I’d also like to thank the member for allowing me to co-sponsor the bill. It’s an issue of great importance to me in my role as parliamentary assistant to agriculture, but more importantly, it’s an issue to me personally.

If I could do a little bit of personal history: Some 39 years ago, I was in England. I came back to Canada from about a year overseas, and I couldn’t drink Canadian beer because I was so used to good, rich English ales like Old Peculier and others. So when I got back to Canada, I went and started to brew my own beer. More so, I got involved with a group called the Campaign for Real Ale 39 years ago and, within four years, we’d changed the rules in Ontario to allow microbreweries to start up. That was almost 35 years ago. From that humble beginning, where we had Connors and the Feathers, the first brew pub in Ontario, which is in my new riding of Beaches—East York, we have now seen an industry that has grown from about 20 breweries 15 years ago to 150-plus. The big change, if you look—it’s like a hockey stick. They went in a slow growth pattern like this until we changed the markup rules at the LCBO, and then they just took right off and they were able to expand right across this province.

I see the cider industry in Ontario being very much in the same place as the beer industry was some 10 or 15 years ago, where there's an opportunity for us to do something very special to allow them to take off with the same kind of profitability that we're seeing in the craft beer industry. So it's an extremely important issue.

I'd also like to thank the member for sharing her time, because I want to point out that I think this is the first time since I've been here that I have seen a co-sponsorship of a private member's bill, and the first time that the lead of the private member's bill has been shared with a member on the other side of the House. So I praise her for that initiative and praise her for her commitment to that.

The craft cider industry has three very big asks of our government.

The first is margin enhancement. What this bill is doing is levelling the playing field between what a can of cider costs at the retailer compared to what a can of craft beer costs. Essentially, it's about a 25% difference. A can of cider in the liquor store costs you just over \$4 and an equivalent-size can of craft beer is about \$3. It's tough for the cider industry to make ends meet on that kind of margin. It's tough to be competitive. This will change that.

There's also a desire to develop a quality control alliance, much like the wine industry have VQA: a cider control alliance where we can promote the fact that this is Ontario apples, Ontario cider and local inputs.

Finally, increasing the retail distribution of ciders across the province: This is part of the Ed Clark review, obviously, but we'd like to see more ciders in stores, having special shelving sections in the LCBO, being able to market more co-operatively with their fellows in craft beer, and in farmers' markets. I see a tremendous opportunity that maybe we can include ciders in farm markets where VQA wines are right now.

Opportunity does knock. Because of our climate, Ontario apples are extremely good for cider production. We need to move forward with that. We have seen, as the member opposite noted, that this is the largest growth section at the LCBO right now, but it's coming, for the most part, from imports in England and France. We have a chance now to promote local jobs, keep those investment dollars in Ontario, and support the people who are picking and the people who are processing. That's what this bill will do, and I hope all members will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll be sharing my time with my colleague Catherine Fife from Kitchener-Waterloo.

The bill we have before us today, Bill 110, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, is a very important bill for my riding of Niagara Falls, and I'm proud to speak in support of it today. I'd also like to take a moment to thank the member from Dufferin and the member from Beaches-East York for their work in bringing the bill forward.

Earlier, I had the pleasure to meet with Richard Liu from Sunnybrook Wine, located in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake. Sunnybrook is—this is key—an Ontario-owned and -operated company that makes wonderful fruit wines and ciders. A producer of Ontario craft cider, the folks at Sunnybrook are committed to using 100% Ontario-grown apples and pears in their products. They make great products using local produce and creating good local jobs.

But when I met with them this afternoon, they told me they face a problem when they go to sell that product. Instead of being on a level playing field with the producers of other craft alcohol beverages, they find themselves at the bottom of the hill looking up.

Why is that the case? What is creating that uneven playing field?

Currently, craft ciders are categorized as a wine by the LCBO. You can see where the logic in that probably comes from. Ciders are produced from fruit, as are wines, which clearly makes them different from beer or spirits. However, as I'm sure most people are aware, that is about where the similarities between cider and wine end.

1550

Cider is packaged like beer. It has similar alcohol content to beer and is consumed like beer, although maybe not quite the same amount is drunk. By classifying craft ciders as a wine and not as a beer, or as a distinct product, a problem is created. The problem is that while craft ciders are classified as a wine, they do not enjoy the same financial benefits available to wineries, nor are they eligible for the rebates given to the craft brewers.

For example, Ontario wineries are eligible for the VQA program. That program allows them to receive a rebate from their sales and is designed, in part, to help Ontario's wineries grow. It is a great program. You all know there are many wineries in my riding, and I'm happy to see programs that are designed to help them. Craft cider producers, on the other hand, are not eligible for the rebate through the VQA program because that program requires the beverage to be made from grapes.

I'll give you another example. When a craft cider producer wants to sell a keg of their cider through the LCBO at a price of \$145, they are charged—think about this—a 20% markup. If, however, a craft beer manufacturer wants to sell a keg of their beer, at the same price, through the LCBO, they are not charged any markup at all. I don't think that makes any sense. You have two kegs—one of cider, one of beer—both very good, both are about the same in alcohol content, both are produced here in Ontario, helping to create local, good-paying jobs, and both will be consumed, hopefully, in a cold pint glass in a responsible manner. Yet the keg of craft cider is going to cost \$30 more than the keg of craft beer.

Despite all of this, cider in Ontario is doing very well, and growing. In 2012-13, cider sales at the LCBO grew by a staggering 76%, after seeing 60% growth in the year prior to that. Unfortunately, most of those sales are not Ontario craft ciders; instead—listen to this because this is important—they are international and Canadian blends or imported ciders.

Bill 110, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, will help to address this uneven playing field that I have just described for you. The bill amends the Liquor Control Act to ensure that the markup or tax on the sale of Ontario craft cider at a government store or at a bar does not exceed the LCBO-imposed markup or tax on the sale of Ontario craft beers. Passing this bill will allow the Ontario craft cider industry to continue to expand and help it in reaching its full potential. The bill is supported, of course, by the Ontario Craft Cider Association, but also by the Ontario Apple Growers and the Ontario Craft Brewers, and I'd like to use my last minute to tell you why.

Quoting from the craft brewers: "Like the craft brewers, Ontario craft cideries strive to produce quality, local products; they create jobs, both rural and urban, build communities and keep alcohol profits in the province. The OCCA have a commitment to use only"—think about this—"100% Ontario apples and pears and will invest heavily in rural infrastructure." Clearly, the craft brewers understand that this bill is actually about more than just helping the Ontario craft cider industry. It's about all of the economic benefits for the rest of the province in doing so.

For example, I spoke recently in this House about how the Ontario tender-fruit growers and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation will be planting 130,000 tender-fruit trees in my riding. Those farmers will benefit from the growth in the Ontario craft cider industry because they will have more people making cider than they will have customers for their products.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 110 is an important piece of legislation for the Ontario craft cider industry, and that's why they're here today. It is an important piece of legislation for my riding of Niagara Falls, and it's an equally important piece of legislation for the entire province. I urge everyone here today to support this bill and to help the Ontario craft cider industry reach its full and very large potential.

I'd just like to say, because this is a private member's bill—and I agree that it's nice to see co-sponsorship—that here is an opportunity where the Conservatives, the Liberals and the NDP are on the same page. We all understand the importance of this industry for the province of Ontario. I say to the Liberals very clearly: You can do this immediately. You have a majority government. You have the support of the Conservatives. You have the support of the NDP. You obviously have the support of the industry. Bring it in with a bill. Let's get it passed so that this summer they will be able to sell their products right across the province of Ontario.

Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to speak about Bill 110 today. I want to thank the member from Dufferin–Caledon and my seatmate from Beaches–East York for co-sharing this important bill. I'm not going to rehash what we've heard from previous speakers, be-

cause that's what the bill is about. Of course, I'm going to support it.

Speaker, I want to talk about a real story that came out of the hard apple cider industry that we have today. I want to talk about some people in my hometown, Brighton, in the little hamlet of Codrington: Jennifer Jarrell McRae and her husband, Chris, and a couple of friends of theirs—I believe they're related—Laura and Felix Withholz. It all started with Chris McRae brewing some apple cider for his own use. Of course, some of their friends tasted their brew, and so they were encouraged. This happens at home; my father used to make homemade wine.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Very good stuff.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Very good stuff. Unfortunately, I don't have his talent, and he is gone.

His friends encouraged him, that maybe he should commercialize this, so he did.

Fast-forward a little bit: They can't keep up with the demand. Working out of their revamped garage—as a matter of fact, this year they planted some five acres of apple trees in their own backyard. But as they will say, when those trees come to fruition, it's not going to be big enough, so they're going to depend on our local apple industry. They're dealing with orchards that are as close as possible to their cider establishment. I can tell you that Northumberland–Quinte West, in those areas—Brighton, for example—was full of apple orchards. We don't have quite as many, but what's left are the best in the province. So they are buying local. They're using local apples. They're going to be able to use their own apples pretty soon, just down the road.

This is a success story for a small business in Ontario. We want them to flourish. I think we need to give them all the opportunity we can.

With what we're trying to do with Bill 110, I think not only Empire Cider will benefit, but I think it will even spur new industry. It's all good, Speaker, and I'm ready to support Bill 110.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 110, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act.

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Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and southern Georgian Bay have the ideal climate for apple production, so it's no surprise that we're the apple capital of Ontario, growing some of the best apples at Vail's Orchards, Barbetta Orchards, Nighthawk Orchards, Grandma Lambe's, Filsinger's orchards, Maple Lane Orchards, Bayview Orchards, as well as Golden Town, a key processor in the province.

As of a few years ago, our area is becoming the cider capital of Ontario as well, being home to five of 22 cideries in Ontario: Coffin Ridge cider, in Annan; Duxbury Cider Co., in Meaford; Beaver Valley cider, in Kimberley; and Hoity Toity Cellars, in neighbouring Huron–Bruce, in Mildmay.

Simcoe-Grey has Thornbury premium cider. With 7,500 acres of apple trees, Thornbury is Ontario's largest producer of craft cider.

Cider, as we've heard, is one of the fastest-growing beverage products, using 10% of the entire harvest of Ontario-grown apples and pears. Over 200,000 litres are produced in a year, across 22 cideries. Compare this number to just several years ago: In 2008, we had just one craft cidery in Ontario.

It's estimated that overall economic activity could grow to over \$60 million by 2018, and 350 jobs could be created in this industry and its suppliers, sending taxes of over \$2 million to local, provincial and federal governments. That kind of success is good for not just my riding's agricultural industry but also for our entire province: jobs and the supply chain of machinery, equipment, storage, bottles, cans etc. The potential for growth is undeniable, but it will take some legislative work to get there.

Bill 110 will ensure that the tax or markup imposed on Ontario cider does not exceed the markup or tax imposed on beer in Ontario. It will also ensure we treat our craft ciders the same we support our craft brewers, levelling the playing field and providing an opportunity for consumers to consume Ontario-grown cider. I think this is good news for not just craft cider producers but also Ontario apple growers.

Here's what James McIntosh, who is with us in the audience today, of Duxbury Cider in Meaford said about the importance of passing Bill 110: "Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is home to the highest concentration of Ontario craft cider makers in the province. This is a great position for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and our homegrown industry is making significant strides in the marketplace. Yet, as North America's oldest and, until recently, forgotten beverage industry, we need new support from the province to make sure we have a strong and lasting future."

"Please consider the tremendous success of our Ontario Craft Brewers as a model to help the Ontario Craft Cider Association's members continue to build the Ontario hard cider industry as a world leader."

Bryan Watts, also in the audience and VP of marketing and sales at Thornbury Beverage Co., said Bill 110 would bring as much as \$11 per case recovery to their cidery: "The reduction of these markups and taxes would be a game-changer for our company and would contribute greatly to our expansion plans in Thornbury, subsequently adding more jobs and agri-tourism revenue to the local economy."

"If Bill 110 is approved and passed by the Legislature, this would mean as much as \$11 per case recovery for Thornbury Beverage Co. Yes, we make \$11 less per case of beer versus a case of cider. Our beer is made from imported ingredients while our cider is made from 100% Thornbury apples. It just makes no sense."

"The more cider we sell, the more apples we need, and we are growing in excess of 30% per year."

I think we owe it to our cider entrepreneurs to pass Bill 110.

One last parting comment: Brian Gilroy of the Ontario Apple Growers association said that if the apple industry continues to shrink, it will lose the supporting businesses and infrastructure. Anything that might help growers transition to new varieties and growing techniques will ensure the sustainability of the industry.

For this reason, I called on the agriculture minister last year to share some of the \$40 million the province earmarked for food processing with apple growers to help revitalize the industry and narrow the gap between what we grow and what we import. Sadly, Ontario continues to lag behind other provinces, a number of which have either implemented or are in the process of implementing an industry revitalization program for their growers. We need to support this.

I'll turn it over to my colleagues Mr. Smith and Mr. Hudak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I think that there's consensus in this room, and that rarely happens.

Of course, New Democrats will be supporting Bill 110. We believe, obviously, in striving for fairness among people, businesses and industries, and this is a perfect example of levelling the playing field in this particular industry. As a result, we will be supporting it and, actually, looking forward to—this could be a precedent-setting day, Mr. Speaker, in this House, this co-sponsorship of bills.

In my own region, of course, there is this one craft cider distributor, KW Craft Cider. I could relate exactly to what the member from Dufferin-Caledon was saying about the markups being a significant deterrent to growing businesses and expanding or creating or going into the start-up business for craft ciders.

KW Craft Cider—his name is Mike Kramar. I was just reading it in the Record. He was selling cider out of the back of his car. He now has some very popular restaurants in the Waterloo area. One of them is the beer bistro Beertown.

The consensus is that cider is becoming just as popular, if not more popular, than those flavored beers. This actually lends to the restaurant business, which of course is supportive of the craft cider industry growing in the province of Ontario, and we welcome those changes. I want to thank both the member from Dufferin-Caledon and the member from Beaches-East York for raising it.

The truth of the matter is that the craft beer industry in Ontario is about 15 years ahead of the cideries, allowing them legislative changes along the way. I think it's very important that the Ontario Craft Brewers has actually come forward and said, "We support this change as well."

The craft industries, period, the local food movement and the local alcohol movement are gaining momentum across the province and across the country, and I think more and more people around the world are recognizing Ontario as a leader in this regard. If we can get this bill

passed, perhaps the government may actually move quicker on it, accelerate the bill so it doesn't sit as a sort of successful private member's bill experience. Let's get this done. I mean, we have to catch up for 15 years now. Let's get it done. Let's work together, level the playing field for this industry and ensure that the economy for the Ontario craft cider industry is bright.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): The member from Halton: I recognize you now.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak in favour of Bill 110, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act. I would like to start by thanking the members from Dufferin–Caledon and Beaches–East York for co-sponsoring this bill.

As you've already heard, the bill amends the Liquor Control Act so that the markup the Liquor Control Board of Ontario imposes on the sale of any Ontario cider, including craft cider, cannot exceed the markup that the board imposes on the sale on any beer, including craft beer. This amendment balances the tax that is imposed on cider in the province. It levels the playing field, as we heard, and makes things fair. That's why I support this amendment.

Cider has become the latest trend in brewing. You just have to take a walk through any local LCBO or check out the beer taps at your local pub to see that cider is gaining in popularity. In fact, the market is growing, and major beer brands have already launched cider in recent years, including Alexander Keith's cider and Molson Canadian cider. Local craft breweries have also been getting into cider brewing. The Ontario Craft Cider Association lists approximately 20 craft brewers across the province. Cider is one of the LCBO's fastest-growing sectors, with Ontario craft cider sales rising 93% in 2014–15. Yes, you heard me right: 93%.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been in the process of modernizing the alcohol system. This is part of our plan to give consumers more convenience and choice, strengthen the position of Ontario's small and craft brewers, and at the same time not waiver on our strong commitment to social responsibility. We are retaining the best parts of our existing retailing system, which will enable Ontario to maintain its consumer prices for beer below the national average. We are strengthening things for our Ontario-based brewers and creating new opportunities for economic growth across the province.

Now, the Ontario cider industry is also an important part of our province's economy, and we are committed to building on its success. It's time that we gave this sector the support it needs, and that is what this bill does. It's important to recognize that, like craft beer and many other parts of this sector, growth in cider sales can lead to other opportunities in agriculture and tourism. I think about the specifically when it comes to my riding.

We know that Ontario is already known for its quality apples. In my riding of Halton there are dozens of farms that have vast apple orchards. For the last few months,

thousands of people have been making their way to the farms and orchards in my region to buy fresh apples and even pick their own bag. If any members, by the way, are interested in heading out to Halton, we have a great website listing all the farms where you can go and purchase your own apples, pick yourself and participate in the many activities going on.

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Our apple growers in this province produce more than 330 million pounds of apples each year, contributing more than \$75 million in terms of Ontario's economy. It's clear there would be additional great benefits from the sustained growth of our craft cider producers.

In 2013, the Ontario Apple Growers and the Ontario Craft Cider Association released an economic impact assessment of the cider industry in Ontario. They stated that cider is Ontario's ideal industry: agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and it's green. The study projected 73% job growth in the industry and among its suppliers by 2018, and projects sales in Ontario of \$35 million by 2018.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear: Cider in the province of Ontario is a success story and I am excited to see where it goes. Today's bill lays the groundwork for a fair tax on cider. It is one step we can take today to support the industry. This will be good for our economy, good for the industry and good for consumers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I'm supporting Bill 110 for three reasons. Let me list them off for you:

(1) It responds to a growing consumer demand for ciders of the province of Ontario;

(2) It has significant economic benefits. I know my colleagues from Niagara will verify that for every dollar spent on VQA wine, there's a \$3 spinoff to the local economy. I suspect something very similar for cider in our province;

(3) Fair is fair. I'll get to that at the end.

I'm proud to say, too, that we have a good number of cideries, along with wineries, in the Niagara and Hamilton area: Revel Cider, Stoney Creek; Puddicombe cider in Winona, just outside of my riding; Sunnybrook—I believe they're here today—Niagara-on-the-Lake and growing.

I'm going to tell you two quick stories in my time. One is true and one's not. First story: We have a tradition in my family. If it's your birthday, you choose the restaurant you go to. One of my colleagues recently announced my birthday. She said I was 58 years old. Speaker, I know being leader does age you, but that is not quite accurate. In fact, I'm 28.

But I got a chance to go to a restaurant and I had a Spirit Tree pear cider. Truth be told, with my birthday on Halloween, the night before, it might have been a bit of hair of the dog. I had a Spirit Tree cider from Caledon, Ontario, an outstanding product. I know Tom Wilson, the owner, is here today. Tom happens to be the president of

the Ontario Craft Cider Association. Welcome, Tom. This shows you that when I'm making random selections of what to drink, it's political at its heart; I picked the one with the president, Speaker.

The second story is that they actually brought in Franz Kafka himself one day for a tour of the LCBO, and then Kafka visited the Ministry of Finance. They tried to walk him through all the rules and regulations around alcohol in the province and Kafka himself said, "This is just nuts," and he ran from the building.

One of those stories is true and one isn't, my point being that sometime we'll get to a place where I can actually go to my corner store or the grocery store and buy cider, buy a VQA wine or buy some liquor at a local, private store. We'll get there. I know some politicians have concerns: "One step at a time." This is a very solid one step.

It's my test sometimes: I think of what Mrs. Jones in Fonthill, Ontario, would have to say. If I said, "A bottle of cider should be taxed the same way as a bottle of beer the same size," she'd say, "Of course. That makes a lot of sense." This particular Ms. Jones from Dufferin-Caledon would probably agree with that as well. I think fair is fair, Speaker.

This is good for agribusiness. It's good for the province. It responds to consumer demand and ultimately, it's fair. I support Bill 110.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great pleasure for me to get a few words on the record this afternoon for Bill 110, a marvellous bill that's been put forward by two wonderful members, from Dufferin-Caledon and Beaches-East York.

I had the opportunity earlier today to meet with the leaders of Ontario's cider industry, to make sure we could do everything possible to advance the growth of the cider industry in the province. In St. Catharines, Ontario, there's a very famous restaurant called the Golden Pheasant. I want to make sure that on Fridays, when people go to the Golden Pheasant in St. Catharines, Ontario, with that \$6.99 fish-and-chips special, they can get their cider as part of their lunch experience on that given day. I know my good friend the member from St. Catharines is looking forward to that experience in the not-too-distant future. We'll be doing everything possible to make sure that happens.

A bit of an aside: I know the good folks of Peterborough are watching this afternoon. They're now turning to channel 95 on Cogeco because they know that this debate is so very important to the future of agriculture in the province of Ontario.

When we looked at some of the statistics here, where it says Ontario craft cider is one of the fastest-growing categories in the LCBO, with sales rising 89% between 2011 and 2015—Al Capone would have been envious of that kind of growth in this alcohol beverage sector. We've got to make sure that we take the steps to build a

foundation to grow the agricultural sector in the province of Ontario.

The member from Halton spoke today. I remember chatting with the previous member from Halton, Ted Chudleigh. I said, "Ted, one of the ways you could grow the apple industry in the province of Ontario is to put a few more apples in your frozen pies that you're selling at Sobeys." That would have been a great way to help expand the apple industry in the province of Ontario. Maybe Ted is working on that as we speak. I hope he is.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking at ways. We're working with Ed Clark in terms of the reform of the beverage alcohol industry in the province of Ontario. You know that we've made some progress in terms of the distribution of beer. We do know that Mr. Clark has set his sights on looking at the other areas—the cider and the fruit wines—in the province of Ontario.

This, with Bill 110, is a unique opportunity. We grow more than 330 million pounds of apples each year, contributing more than \$75 million to the province's agriculture economy. I've had the opportunity to visit with my good friend Charlie Stevens. Charlie operates Wilmot Orchards in Clarington, Ontario. I've also visited Algoma Orchards in Clarington. Of course, Algoma is a vertically integrated business, where they grow the apples and they produce wonderful ciders.

I am glad that we are achieving a consensus on all sides of the House to support Bill 110. I want to encourage all members of the House to take the opportunity to support Bill 110 and be at the Golden Pheasant this Friday to get your apple cider and fish-and-chips special. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

This is a great bill. We need to support it. We've got to move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: What we've heard here today is a lot of people doing a lot of bragging about the best region in the province. It has given a lot of people the chance to brag about the great products that come from their area, their region and their riding. But I can tell you there's no cider better than the cider that comes from Prince Edward county. The granddaddy of the beverage alcohol sector is in Prince Edward county and he's the granddaddy when it comes to cider: Grant Howes is right here. Hey, good to see you, Grant. It's good to see Jenifer Dean here as well, from beautiful Waupoos on the south shore of Prince Edward county. They produce some amazing things.

You all know what a great place to live Prince Edward county is, what a great place to visit Prince Edward county is. We have over 40 wineries now. We have a beautiful craft distillery, 66 Gilead. We've got a couple of great breweries down there. Barley Days Brewery just re-opened a couple of weeks ago. They're members of the craft brewers association. We've got Lake on the Mountain brewery, which is wonderful as well, down by the Glenora ferry. They're going to re-open in a new facility next spring.

But the granddaddy of the beverage alcohol sector in Prince Edward county, the guy who came before all of those great venues, was Waupoos's own County Cider, and they're producing some great stuff. If I went through the list of everything that they've produced and all the awards that they've won, we would have to have another hour just to talk about the great stuff that's being produced there. It all comes from the wonderful limestone soil in Prince Edward county.

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The Howes family have 40 acres of apples there. I believe it's 15 different types of apples that they're using for their ciders. They have the pear cider as well, and the blood orange cider—all of this is good stuff.

But as Mr. Hudak alluded to earlier, there are three reasons why he is supporting this bill. There are three reasons why I am supporting this bill as well. They're sort of the same.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's good for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Todd Smith: Yes.

(1) We need to level the playing field, right? It only makes sense. We've heard a lot of numbers being tossed around here this afternoon as to the disadvantage that the cider industry has in Ontario. The craft brewers have a better deal, and they're fully in support of the craft ciders getting that same deal. It's just fair. Level that playing field. Allow them to compete in the same way that the craft brewers have been able to do.

There's so much more that we could do to help the craft brewers as well. There was a guy in the Legislature who introduced a bill not so long ago, the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, that might do that as well.

(2) We could create jobs in Ontario. What we all want to do is see more jobs created, especially in rural Ontario. We need those jobs.

Everybody has talked about all the jobs that could be created in apple orchards, in cideries and in manufacturing facilities. If they were just given that level playing field, they could actually create jobs and expand the market faster than it has been expanding already. Ms. Jones, from Dufferin—Caledon, actually alluded to how quickly the industry has been growing. So we want to create jobs in Ontario.

(3) It's just the best darned cider out there, and it should be given an opportunity to expand into different markets.

I know that Mr. Howes has his County Cider in California. They're selling County Cider in California now. You know what? That's great. That's great, but there are a lot of other states that don't have access to County Cider right now that should. There are all kinds of other countries—and provinces in Canada, for that matter—that should get to experience the great products of Prince Edward county.

Let's level the playing field. Let's create jobs in Ontario. Let's let the world taste our award-winning cider that we're producing here in Ontario.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Cheers to that.

Mr. Todd Smith: Bob Bailey says, "Cheers to that," and I think, from what I've heard today, all 107 members of the Legislature are in full support of the private member's bill, Bill 110, supporting the craft cider industry. We believe that maybe we should call a vote on this, just to test the temperature of the Legislature, to see if this is something that might pass.

Bill 110 is exactly what we need to allow the craft cider industry to grow and to expand and to create jobs in Ontario. It's long overdue. The tax system hasn't been fair for this sector for a long, long time. Mr. Howes has been in the industry for 20 years. They call him Grandpa Cider for a reason. It's time that we gave this sector of our Ontario economy that level playing field so they can compete.

Everybody in the Legislature, let's raise a glass to Ontario today and say cheers to Ms. Jones for her private member's bill. Let's support the craft cider industry in the province of Ontario. Cheers to that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to say that I'm speechless, but I'm not—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): One second.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ten seconds?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay, I recognize the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane. You have 10 seconds.

Mr. John Vanthof: In reality, Speaker, we all support this bill, but the reality is that only one side of this House can make this bill a reality very quickly, and that's the government side, and we urge them to do it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin—Caledon, you've got two minutes for a response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Obviously, I'm thrilled that people from all sides but, more importantly, from all parts of Ontario—actually, when the last member spoke, from northern Ontario, I can now honestly say that I have support, with the member from Beaches—East York, for Bill 110 from across Ontario—eastern Ontario, southern Ontario, northern Ontario. I very much appreciate it. I know that the members from the Ontario Craft Cider Association appreciate it. Thank you for your encouragement and your support of the bill today.

I'm going to say that, while it is accurate to suggest that only government can bring forward this bill into committee and for third reading, there is actually a third way, and the third way is by regulation. So while I don't often say this, please take my bill. Put it into regulation. Make the changes. You don't need to wait for legislation to bring forward this change that will make such a difference in rural Ontario in the industry.

As I say, I don't often say, "Steal my bills," but you're welcome to this one. I think it has resonance both in our

communities and, more importantly, on our economic vitality. So by all means, it's yours.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order: the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I respectfully invite all members of the chamber to welcome the next contribution of the Qaadri household to the parliamentary process, Shafiq Qaadri Jr. Hopefully he'll be standing and be recognized in the members' gallery.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX
ABOLITION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 ABOLISSANT
L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION
DES SUCCESSIONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 79, standing in the name of Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to abolish the estate administration tax and provide for related matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this vote at the end of private members' business.

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL
SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(PAROLE), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS
(LIBÉRATION CONDITIONNELLE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Yakabuski has moved second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act in respect of parole. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Mr. Yakabuski?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It is requested that it be referred to justice policy. Agreed? Agreed.

GROWING ONTARIO'S CRAFT
CIDER INDUSTRY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA CROISSANCE
DE L'INDUSTRIE DU CIDRE
ARTISANAL DE L'ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to refer it to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It is requested that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Agreed? Agreed.

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX
ABOLITION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 ABOLISSANT
L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION
DES SUCCESSIONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1629 to 1634.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the members to please take their seats? Thank you.

Mr. Brown has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to abolish the estate administration tax and provide for related matters.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoggart, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz

Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John

MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted

Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Thibeault, Glenn
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 24; the nays are 51.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move adjournment of the House, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

I declare that the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, November 16 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1638.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Mileczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
		Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent–Essex	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadir, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
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		Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
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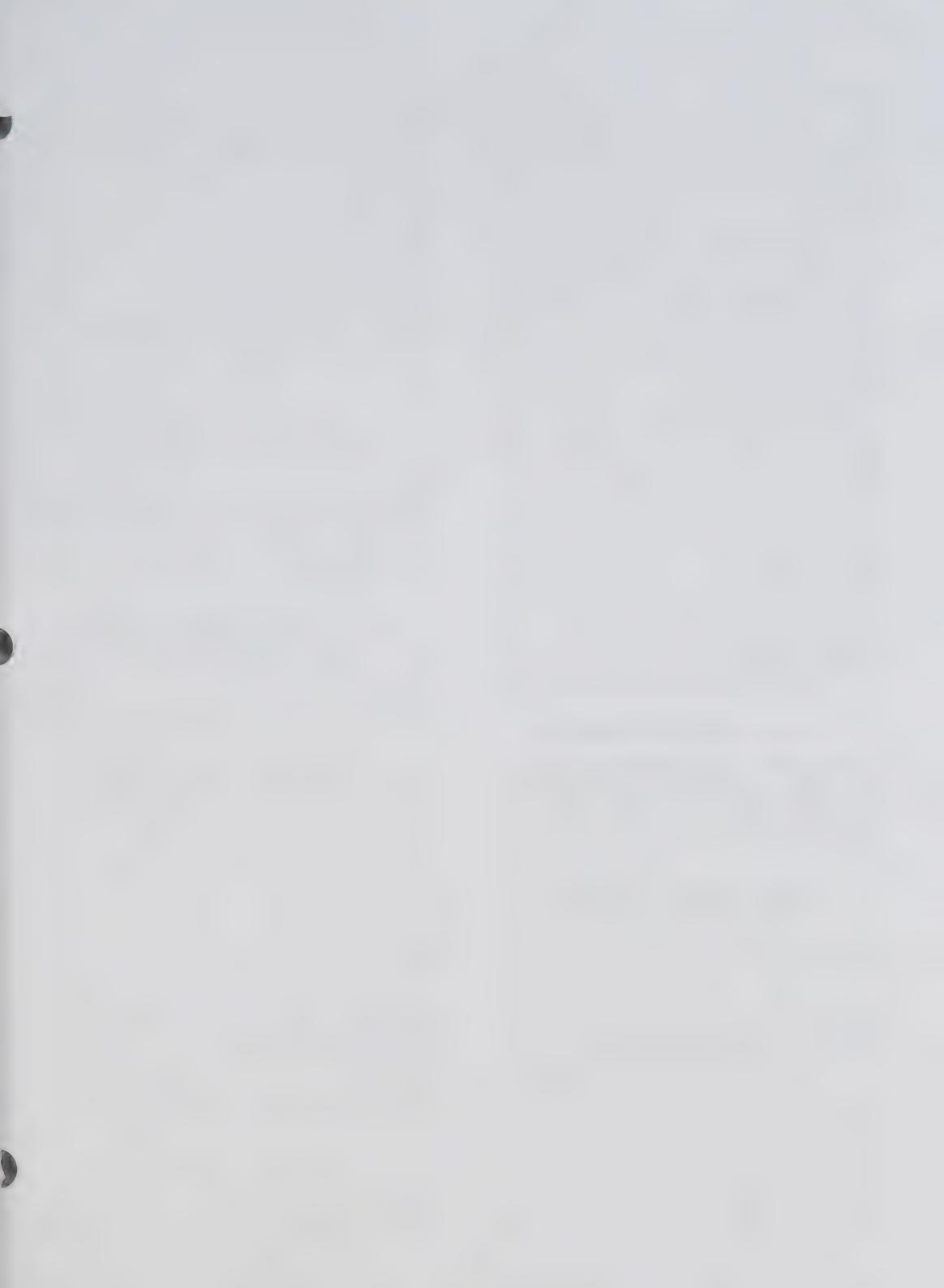
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

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**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 16 November 2015

Lundi 16 novembre 2015



**Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac**

**Président
L'honorable Dave Levac**

**Clerk
Deborah Deller**

**Greffière
Deborah Deller**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 novembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and recognize Robert Chee, who is in the gallery with us today. We've enjoyed his hospitality at Aviv restaurant, and we're pleased that he could join us here in the Legislature today. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature, Robert.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to welcome our new page Ross Cameron; his father, Gordon Cameron; grandmother Dorothy Cameron; and aunt Alison Davis. They're in the gallery today.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge that the page captain today is Megan Faith Ally. She is visited here by her father, Ferowsie Ally.

Mrs. Gila Martow: We have with us today Nechama Shaki. Her husband, Professor Avner Shaki, was a minister in the Israeli government, the Knesset. She is also here with her brother Mark Sibilia. Welcome.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce today Gurmail Singh Nirman, from the Sikh spiritual event in Toronto, and Manohar Singh Bal, from the Council for Sikh Affairs. They are here today to host a memorial event to commemorate and remember the innocent men, women and children who lost their lives in India in 1984. The reception will take place in committee room 228. I encourage everybody to join us.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Khushwant Singh and Bikram Singh Bal, from the Council for Sikh Affairs. Of course, they're here to host the memorial event for those who lost their lives in India in November 1984.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Mr. Speaker, Kerry Shoalts, the mother of Benjamin Shoalts, who is a new page from Welland, is here in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce Michael Forian, who is the outgoing assistant to Minister Kelley, the Quebec minister of aboriginal affairs in the Quebec National Assembly.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's my pleasure to introduce members of the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition, who may be making their way into the gallery at this time. We have Bob Gordanier from the Beef

Farmers of Ontario; Mark Brock from the Grain Farmers of Ontario; Amy Cronin from Ontario Pork; Eric Schwindt from Ontario Pork; Gary Fox from Ontario Sheep; Rob Scott from Ontario Sheep; and Judy Dirksen from the Veal Farmers of Ontario.

We're hosting a reception at lunch in room 228, and I do hope you'll all join us.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: They're still making their way into the House, but I ask members of the assembly to join me in welcoming Jasbir Singh and Atam Singh, who are also here for the remembrance event acknowledging those who lost their lives during the 1984 genocide in India.

ATTACKS IN PARIS

ATTENTATS À PARIS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

L'hon. Yasir Naqvi: Je me lève pour demander un consentement unanime pour marquer les événements tragiques survenus à Paris la semaine dernière. Un représentant de chaque parti parlera pendant cinq minutes, suivi d'un moment de silence, et les drapeaux à l'Assemblée législative seront en berne.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to mark the tragic events in Paris last week, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes, followed by a moment of silence, and that the flags at the Legislature be flown at half-mast. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that I speak on behalf of all of the people of Ontario when I say that we are saddened and shocked by the attacks on innocents by people who can only be described as terrorists.

Our thoughts today and since Friday have been with the mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, partners, families and friends of those who were murdered or injured. You have suffered most severely, and we are holding you in our hearts.

Today I extend my condolences, on behalf of the government of Ontario, to all of the people in France, and to those in France and around the world who lost loved ones in these senseless attacks.

Au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario, je tiens à offrir aujourd'hui mes condoléances à l'ensemble du peuple de France et aux autres personnes de France et du monde entier qui ont perdu des êtres chers.

I also want to acknowledge the bravery of the first responders who worked tirelessly to treat the injured and to restore security.

The emotions we are feeling in the wake of these human tragedies are straightforward and, if deeply disturbing, pure and uncomplicated. What is much more complicated is the range of emotions and reactions to Friday night beyond human compassion.

It is almost impossible not to react with anger and loathing at the cowardice of these attacks. That anger will be coloured by vengeful rage, but at the heart of many of our responses is fear—fear that such random violence could touch any of us; fear that we will respond in ways that will further inflame; fear that we have no response that will be adequate and that will actually help the world to prevent such brutality tomorrow and the next day.

We have all been touched by this tragedy, directly or indirectly. Now it is our responsibility to support and pray for world leaders as they search for the wisest response.

This evil can be overcome, as evil has been overcome in human history before. But fear is not the answer. Vengeful rage is not the answer. Those emotions can be used as fuel as the world gathers its power to respond, but they should not be at the heart of the strategy. It is our responsibility, in our own lives and communities, to guard against and to resist the blame and generalizations that can lead to racism and hatred.

I was saddened to hear about the disturbing case of arson at the mosque in Peterborough this weekend.

1040

In the shadow of Friday's violence, our open, peaceful, inclusive democracy is even more important to the world.

France will be forever changed by these events, yet as we saw less than a year ago after the Charlie Hebdo attack, the people of France will not be silenced and will not succumb to fear. The French values of liberty, equality and fraternity are strong and unwavering. In the days since the attacks, we have seen them shine more brightly than ever.

Les valeurs françaises, qui sont la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité, sont solides et indéfectibles. Dans les jours qui ont suivi les attaques, nous avons vu ces valeurs briller plus que jamais.

Today in the Legislature, at the centre of our own democratic system, we are united in our commitment to uphold our ideals of democracy, freedom and peace. Today, we stand in solidarity with the people of France and with people everywhere who work towards a better and more peaceful world. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. Patrick Brown: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I rise today to express our deepest condolences to those who have been touched by these vicious acts of terrorism that took place in Paris on November 13, 2015.

Au nom du caucus PC de l'Ontario, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour exprimer nos plus sincères condoléances à ceux qui ont été touchés par les actes

vieux de terrorisme qui ont eu lieu à Paris le 13 novembre.

We are not immune to the hatred and terror that exist in the world. Nous ne sommes pas à l'abri de la haine et de la terreur qui existent dans le monde.

Today, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of France, just as they stood by Canada after last year's shooting on Parliament Hill.

Liberté, égalité et fraternité : freedom, equality and fraternity—values that describe our Canadian way of life. The people of this province and country have remained united in our resolve to protect freedom and encourage equality so that future generations can enjoy the same.

Les gens de cette province et de ce pays sont restés unis dans notre détermination à protéger notre liberté et de favoriser l'égalité afin que les générations futures puissent profiter de la même chose.

It is these very values that have heartened us to provide support to those in need at home and abroad.

To those Canadians fighting ISIS, fighting this vile evil on the front lines, we say thank you for your courage and personal sacrifice. Canada must always stand steadfast in our international fight against these forces of terror and inhumanity. In the wake of horror, humanity of all faiths and backgrounds unite against acts of hatred, such as we saw in Paris and Beirut last week.

As the entire world reflects on these acts of terror, we must resolve to remain vigilant and stand together to defend what those before us have fought so hard to keep. We must be resolute in our stance against terrorism, violence and hate, and those who want to destroy our very way of life.

Nous devons être résolus dans notre position contre le terrorisme, la violence, la haine et ceux qui veulent détruire notre façon de vie.

These acts of terror, allegedly conducted in the name of religion, are nothing more than a distorted view. Religion preaches love, not hate.

Ces actes de terreur supposément menés au nom de la religion ne sont rien de plus qu'une vision déformée. La religion prêche l'amour, pas la haine.

Pope Francis, in discussing the atrocious acts last week, stated, "There is no religious or human justification for it."

This past weekend, as the Premier mentioned, we saw a mosque in Peterborough destroyed, deliberately set on fire. We must remember that Muslim Canadians also share in the world's grief and anguish over ongoing conflict. The Muslim Association of Canada wrote, "Violence against civilians, wherever it is perpetrated, is unacceptable and a corruption of our [Muslim] beliefs. Human wisdom and divine teachings of Islam and indeed every faith teaches us to abhor such acts."

Any act of hate is deplorable. We must remain calm and tolerant, one of the most profound Canadian values. Nous devons rester calmes et tolérants—une des valeurs les plus importantes.

In difficult times like these, there are often isolated incidents perpetrated by individuals who seek to exploit

global events to divide Canadians. It is exactly this type of behaviour that extremist groups seek to provoke.

As Canadians, we will continue to draw on our shared values to reject this violence and send a clear message to those groups that seek to divide us: We will not be divided.

Last week, on Remembrance Day, we gathered to honour and remember those who have sacrificed so much to keep us safe. It is because of these selfless acts that we can enjoy freedom. So to the men and women who serve to keep us safe with the Canadian Forces, and Ontario's police, firefighters and paramedics, we say thank you.

Donc, pour les hommes et les femmes qui servent à nous protéger avec les Forces canadiennes, la police provinciale, les pompiers et les ambulanciers de l'Ontario, nous disons merci.

And to the men, women and children who have faced unspeakable terror these past few days, we say we stand with you, united.

Et pour les hommes, les femmes et les enfants qui ont été confrontés à une indicible terreur ces derniers jours, nous disons : nous sommes avec vous, unis. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further response?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I rise today to join with members of all parties and with all Ontarians in expressing our shock, our condolences and our solidarity with the people of France.

There are moments when we hug our loved ones even closer, even tighter, and even longer than usual, moments when we pick up the phone and call our grown children just to say that we love them. Now is one of those times.

For all the wrong reasons, reasons born of senseless, inexplicable tragedy, we have been reminded of how precious life is and how it can be stolen. This weekend's attacks on Paris, the worst attacks in France since the Second World War, are heinous and brutal acts of violence. They have shattered hundreds of lives: the lives of mothers and fathers, young lovers, elderly couples and children. Too many people have been killed; too many people have been injured. As we speak, families across France, Lebanon and indeed around the world are grieving. They are trying to come to terms with the sudden loss of their loved ones.

It is heartbreaking for all of us. No family and no city should ever have to experience such excruciating pain, whether it is Paris or Beirut.

Aujourd'hui, je tiens à exprimer nos condoléances au Consul général de France à Toronto, Marc Trouyet.

Our thoughts are also with the thousands of French citizens who live in our communities across Ontario. They may be far away from home, and their thoughts and worries are certainly with their friends and families back in France, but I know that their new family here in Ontario stands with them.

In workplaces and neighbourhoods across this province, Ontarians are doing what we can to help at this difficult time. This weekend, Ontarians came together to show our support for the people of France. More than a

thousand people gathered here in Toronto. On chalkboards outside restaurants, menus were erased and the Eiffel Tower peace sign was drawn in their place. Signs in shop windows were changed to read simply, "Pray for Paris." In churches, mosques, synagogues and places of worship, that's exactly what Ontarians have been doing.

Yes, there is a disturbing report this morning of the violence in our own province: a fire set to a mosque in Peterborough. This is unacceptable. As the mayor of Peterborough said, "Attacking a place of worship is a despicable act." The police will do their work to uncover what happened, but together we must do our work to ensure that such attacks are never tolerated. We must all reach out to the Muslim community in Ontario at this time, because there is no place in our province for acts of hate and prejudice against any community in any form.

Today in this House, we stand together with the people of France against violence and fear. We share the belief that intimidation has no place in politics, no place in a democratic society based on freedom, justice and human rights. We share the belief that these attacks will not make us more closed, more fearful and more distressful. In the face of such violence, we must reaffirm our openness, our love for each other and our determination to build a better future together.

This morning, on behalf of our caucus and all New Democrats, I extend our deepest condolences to the people of France. We stand together with their entire nation—a nation founded on the principles of liberté, égalité and fraternité. These are timeless values on which France stands tall, and they are values of our humanity that will never be shaken and cannot be defeated.

To the people of Paris: Nous sommes avec vous.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their thoughtful and heartfelt thoughts. As part of the unanimous consent, I would ask all members of the House and the legislative galleries to rise for a moment of respect.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

To bring clarity to what I believe was the intent of the motion, I understand that today begins the three days of grieving for France, that the flags will be at half-mast for three days and that the courtesy flagpole will fly the French flag, with the interruption of the Métis flag-raising that was arranged for today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. I'll save the government the trouble of touting the \$1.8 billion they state the Hydro One sale IPO made. Private investors jumped at this hot stock because it was a fire sale. You wouldn't see people rushing to buy this stock

unless they thought they were getting a steal—a steal that will be on the backs of Ontario's families who can barely afford their energy bills as it is. The fire sale isn't going to pay for infrastructure. The infrastructure budget of \$130 billion was already funded in 2014. It's all spin: Distract the public by saying it's for infrastructure. In reality, it's to pay for scandal and waste.

My question for the Premier is, which one of your scandals is this fire sale intended to pay for: eHealth, gas, Ornge? Which one is it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding is that the Leader of the Opposition didn't think we were going to be able to realize the amount of money we need for infrastructure. Now there's too much money coming in.

Let me just say that we are very pleased that there was a successful IPO for Hydro One that has generated almost \$3 billion so far. That's a very good thing. I'm pleased to see that the IPO was well received by markets. It was well received because people see the value of the company.

What we know is that the benefits from this process will be many for the people of Ontario. The motivation, as the Leader of the Opposition knows quite well, is that we need to invest in infrastructure in this province if we are going to be globally competitive; there is no question about that. I will tell you, having been in China talking to companies and officials across the country, that I'm even more convinced that we need those investments—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find both sides disruptive enough, so I'll try to get to questions and answers properly.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: "Broadening ownership," "leveraging assets" and "necessary investments" are all buzzwords that Liberal ministers have been reading from their talking points. Let's call a spade a spade: It's a wrong-headed, desperate fire sale.

What the people of Ontario really want is for the government to protect an asset for future generations that has built this great province since 1908. People are tired of playing the government's shell games that only help the government's books look better for two years. The government should look beyond the next election and listen to the Financial Accountability Officer. Former Premier Ernie Eves looked at this and walked away, realizing that it hurt the province's long-term future.

Will the Premier do the right thing: walk away and protect this important asset for Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If we're going to go back to the previous government's record, Mr. Speaker, we'll start with the 407. That's where we'll start, because that was the fire sale of all fires sales. We learned from all the mistakes that were made by that government.

So I talked about the investments in infrastructure that are critical. Let me talk about some of the other benefits that will flow from this. What this will do is it will allow for increased investments in those infrastructure initiatives

without further raising taxes, without increasing debt or without recklessly cutting public services. This will be a better-run company. We haven't talked, I think, enough about that. The fact is that Hydro One needs to be an improved company, Mr. Speaker. There are many, many changes that need to take place in that company. That will happen with stronger management and with a company committed to customer service and performance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: You need to get out of the Queen's Park bubble and listen to what Ontarians are saying. I was at a rally in Mississauga on the weekend, of hard-working Ontarians, about the fire sale—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjection: It's all a joke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When the Speaker stands, you're supposed to be quiet over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I've got a quip for you but I'm just going to pass.

Finish please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, this isn't a joke. I was at a rally in Mississauga on the weekend and thousands of residents were concerned about this fire sale. Rallies like this are springing up all over Ontario. Leadership is understanding that if you have made a mistake, to correct course, not to proceed stubbornly despite evidence suggesting it's wrong. Why does this government have a Financial Accountability Officer if you're not going to listen? Why do you say that you value municipalities if you don't take note of their resolutions?

The government has sold 15%. You still have time to do the right thing. You still have time to keep majority. Will you do the right thing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, let me just talk about outside the Queen's Park bubble: Outside the Queen's Park bubble, where I have been for a number of days, people are looking at us and saying, "Are you going to build infrastructure?" If I bring my company from China to Ontario, am I going to be able to?"

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon and the member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I talk to companies in China who want to expand or bring business into Ontario, Mr. Speaker, they want to know that they're going to be able to move their goods across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, they want to know that we are committed to making the investments that are going to allow them to thrive, so that's what is going on outside the Queen's Park bubble.

The reality is that if we are going to compete in a global economy, if we're going to be able to compete with jurisdictions that are investing in infrastructure, that are building, then we have to do the same. That's why we made this decision.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Hydro One fire sale is causing Ontarians to be concerned for a number of reasons. One of those is that these gold-plated paycheques handed out to Hydro One executives still don't make sense, and I've tried asking about this before and I didn't get an answer.

Last year, the 61 highest-paid CEOs and presidents in the province made a combined \$24 million. That's how much the Liberals are giving just the top four people at Hydro One. The compensation doesn't make sense, and people in Ontario want an explanation.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier take responsibility to rein in this executive compensation that doesn't make sense to anyone in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I hope that when the Leader of the Opposition is having these conversations with people in Ontario, he's talking to them about a number of other things. I hope he's also talking to them about the infrastructure investments that their municipalities are looking for. That's the first thing.

I hope he's also talking about the fact that Ontario will remain—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —the largest single shareholder in Hydro One, with 40% of the company, so that taxpayers will benefit from an improved company.

I hope he makes it clear to the people of Ontario that that improved company, that stronger management, that focus on performance, that company that will grow and will be a better company will actually benefit the people of Ontario.

I hope he knows those realities, those facts, as he has a conversation with the people of Ontario.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: In terms of this being for infrastructure, your infrastructure budget hasn't changed. It's still \$130 billion. It's not about infrastructure.

The CEO of Cancer Care Ontario makes just over \$500,000; the Royal Conservatory of Music, \$450,000 for

their CEO; Colleges Ontario and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind—their CEOs make \$330,000. You think it's appropriate for Hydro One's CEO to make \$4 million. It doesn't add up.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier believe that Hydro One executives deserve so much more than these other organizations that are doing so much to create prosperity in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The question from the opposition isn't sincere, only because they themselves have, for long, tried to propose the dismantling of Ontario Hydro to what it became. We now have taken the necessary steps to secure the value of Hydro One, a component of that overall conglomerate that they destroyed. We have weeded out and did the necessary steps to provide value.

We have now done the first IPO, which has generated a net of \$3 billion for the people of Ontario. Its valuation has now improved as a result. We've taken that and we're reinvesting into the province by creating new assets, unlike the member opposite, who wants to recklessly sell everything off—100%—or provide massive cuts across Ontario. We're not doing that. We've established a much-better-run company as a result of the steps that we've taken.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: A \$4-million salary—the government knows how much money other provincial hydro executives make. They know how much money other chief executives in this province make. They know Ontario hydro rates are among the highest in North America.

The government knows. They have been getting calls at their constituency offices, just like everyone in the Legislature has. Ontarians shouldn't be put in a position to choose between heating their homes and paying their energy bills, yet the Premier continues to dance around, justifying these gold-plated paycheques to Hydro One executives.

Mr. Speaker, I've asked numerous times, does the Premier think it's appropriate to pay the Hydro One CEO \$4 million? And if you can't justify it, can any one of your ministers justify it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The question is, was it appropriate for us to restructure Hydro One? Was it effective for us to take the necessary steps to increase its value? Absolutely. Is it effective that we reinvest those net gains—\$3 billion in net gains from this first tranche—into our economy? Absolutely. The member opposite knows that. The member opposite couldn't do that. In fact, what they're suggesting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have definitely put in new leadership at Hydro One. We have taken the necessary

steps to provide a new board and a new executive and, as a result, we've increased its valuation and improved the values that Ontarians still have, which is 84% of Hydro One. That company is worth more today than it was last week because of the steps we've taken, and we'll continue to provide greater value as we reinvest those funds.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ed Clark told the Premier to sell off Hydro One. So even though 185 municipalities want to keep hydro public, businesses are worried about rates, First Nations weren't consulted and eight in 10 families want to keep Hydro One public, the Premier is selling off Hydro One. She's listening to her unelected banker instead of Ontario families.

Last week, Ed Clark talked about hospitals, universities and colleges and said he wanted to "link them more closely to the private sector, turn them into exporters."

Can the Premier tell Ontarians, is this Liberal code for saying she's going to be privatizing and selling off health and education services in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's quite clear that the leader of the third party and, quite frankly, the Leader of the Opposition are not interested in the investments in infrastructure that we know we need to make. They have been quite clear about that.

The leader of the third party, I think, has issues with creating partnerships outside of our borders. That's really what Ed Clark was talking about. I would say to the leader of the third party that we have developed huge expertise in health and education within Ontario.

As the member knows, I was recently in China; I just got back. I want to talk to her about two examples of how we can use that expertise to create partnerships that can benefit people within Ontario and outside of Ontario. I'll give her those examples in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians expect their Premier to set priorities and show judgment. The Premier wasn't elected on a plan to sell Hydro One, and here we are. She's putting Mike Harris to shame with her Hydro One sell-off.

And the same unelected banker who wrote the plan to sell Hydro One has now been given carte blanche by this Premier. The Premier can't seem to say no to her unelected banker, and he has opened the door now to privatization in our public hospitals, hospitals that have already suffered years of cuts and bed closures under this Liberal government.

Will this Premier tell Ed Clark to back off of our universal public health care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: The leader of the third party is saying that she stands in opposition to partnerships with entities outside of Ontario in the education and health sectors, so she would stand in opposition to the two agreements that I'm going to talk about now.

These are agreements—make note—that create jobs, that actually spur investment and that foster innovation in our province. The first one is between TV Ontario and CBS Consulting Inc. of Markham. They're entering into an agreement to provide English language high school courses to Chinese students. That's an investment of \$250,000, which will create four jobs. It's a small agreement, but it takes expertise that has been developed here and allows people outside of Ontario to benefit.

The second one is an agreement between SickKids hospital and Children's Hospital of Fudan University. I'll go into the details in the supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier this month, the Minister of Health gave a speech that mentioned transformation no less than 18 times. Now, Ontarians are learning that the man who is driving those changes will be the same unelected banker that was behind the sell-off of Hydro One. Ed Clark says we need to link our hospitals "more closely to the private sector" and "turn them into exporters."

Why is this Premier opening the door to privatization in health care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will just talk about this agreement between the SickKids and Children's Hospital of Fudan University, because this is what we're talking about.

This memorandum of understanding will initiate a multi-year partnership to support neonatology through, first, advisory services to support the design, quality improvement and workflow of a new CHFU neonatal tower; secondly, the development of education and training programs for physicians, nurses and management to be delivered in both China and Canada; and thirdly, the possible coordination of joint academic conferences and joint research projects.

Mr. Speaker, this will save Chinese babies' lives. This will make the quality of health care better in China. The leader of the third party is standing in opposition to that kind of improvement. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. We live in the world, and she should get on board.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Canadian, Ontario-funded health care professionals and institutions should be providing health care to the people of Ontario, which they cannot get under this Liberal government. That's where our focus should be.

Speaking of privatization, I have a very basic question for this Premier: Will the Premier rule out the selling off of more revenue-generating assets here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way I see our innovation and our capacity in Ontario is that, of course, it is first and foremost to benefit the people of this province. But we live in the world. We live in a globe that has a need for the innovation that starts here.

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I just came back from Beijing with our Minister of Economic Development and our Minister of International

Trade. In Beijing, it is very hard to breathe. The air is so polluted that it's clear that there needs to be a change in those cities. The government officials know it.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, we have technology here in Ontario that we can bring to the world, that we can share; innovation that can benefit the people who live in those cities. Surely the leader of the third party thinks that's a good thing for us to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I asked the Premier about her intentions to sell off more revenue-generating assets. I don't think she heard me.

The Minister of Finance has refused to rule out selling off more revenue-generating assets. The President of the Treasury Board has refused to rule out selling off more revenue-generating assets. My finance critic has written to the minister and has had no response. Now I have written to the Premier.

The Premier can clear this up with a one-word simple answer. Will the Premier tell Ontarians whether or not more revenue-generating assets are going on the auction block?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party knows that what we intended to do was written in our budget. We talked about real estate assets. We said that we were going to ask Ed Clark to look at the assets owned by the people of Ontario. He has done that; he has given us advice.

Will we continue to work to share our technology and our expertise, whether it's in education, whether it's in clean tech, whether it's in health care? Will we work to continue to share that with the world? Will we develop partnerships and will we help companies in Ontario to expand and export across the world, whether it's in agri-food or whether it's in energy? Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will do that, because the expertise that is grown here in Ontario is second to none. We're proud of it. We are going to shop it to the world so that we can improve the lives of not just people in Ontario, but people around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this Liberal government has no mandate to sell off Hydro One—no mandate whatsoever. No matter what this Premier says, they did not tell Ontarians that was their intention during the last election campaign. Now they're leaving the door open to selling off even more.

To every Ontarian: You deserve a government that is honest with you about what their intentions are.

Will this Premier do the right thing, be honest with the people of Ontario, and tell them here and now, in this Legislature, which revenue-generating assets are on the auction block?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it was so clear in our budget that even the leader of the third party

got it. Here's what she said just days after the last election: "The budget says in black and white that the government is looking at the sale of assets, 'including ... crown corporations, such as Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.'" That's what the leader of the third party said.

Mr. Speaker, it was clear that we were looking at assets and leveraging those assets in order to be able to invest in the infrastructure that we know we need for the 21st century.

The leader of the third party can look right in the camera and she can talk solely about Hydro One. What she's not talking about is that in those same municipalities, in every one of those communities, there are needs: There are needs for roads; there are needs for bridges; there are needs for upgraded water systems; there's need for transit. She's not talking about that because she has no way of funding that investment; we are. We're building Ontario up.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. After serious questions were raised about the safety of the province's new Toronto South Detention Centre, a memo on confidentiality was issued to all staff from the facility's director advising staff to keep quiet or possibly risk losing their jobs. The memo warns that the disclosure of any information may "damage the reputation of the ministry."

It's clear that the government is more concerned with protecting its image than with protecting correctional officers and inmates. This memo is an insult to the men and women who risk their lives day in and day out in dangerous conditions. They have tried to go through the proper channels and were ignored. When they spoke out to an opposition critic, the government tried to silence them.

Why is the minister trying to muzzle correctional officers who are only speaking out to protect public safety?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We very much cherish and appreciate the work that our correctional officers and probation and parole officers do in our institutions across Ontario every single day. Their health and safety is the number one priority for myself and our ministry. We're working along with them. I invite the members opposite from both parties to work with us as we transform our correctional system to ensure that we really focus on individuals and we break the cycle of criminality that exists in our system.

Toronto South Detention Centre plays a very important role as a newer institution in that transformation because it contains innovative programming and health care services that improve our capability to rehabilitate offenders to make sure that they are better reintegrated into the community.

I look forward to speaking to some of those unique features more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: We may know why the ministry wants to strong-arm its correctional officers into staying quiet. Just over a week ago, five scathing reports were released about detention centres across the province. The findings range from concerning to horrific. The common issues were a chronic amount of understaffing, which in turn led to an overuse of lockdowns, which is inhumane and makes inmates more hostile, leading to more staffing challenges and more lockdowns.

The troubling reports were given to the government in March but publicly released in November.

Mr. Speaker, what steps has the minister taken in those months to address the crisis in corrections?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm glad that the member opposite spoke about the reports that we made available to the public that were developed by the community advisory boards. It was this government, under the previous minister's leadership, the current Attorney General, that created those community advisory boards so that we could create a link between our communities and our institutions. Then we gave those members of the community advisory boards access to our institutions so that they could give us the community's perspective as to how we could improve the conditions in our detention centres and transform those detention centres.

That is why our government took the step of making those reports available publicly: so that there is more guidance for us to work together in transforming our system. It shows our commitment and devotion to ensuring that our correctional system is not just a warehousing model of incarceration but actually focuses on individuals so that they can better rehabilitate and reintegrate into our community. We all succeed when those inmates are properly—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. On Thursday, the government issued a press release saying it was getting \$2.2 billion from the Hydro One sale in a special tax benefit. But during estimates, I asked about that \$2.2 billion, and senior public servants said the \$2.2 billion isn't cash. It's not money that can be spent; it's just an accounting entry.

Can the Premier explain how she can spend \$2.2 billion on subways when that \$2.2 billion isn't in anyone's bank account and doesn't exist as cash?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite references the deferred tax benefit that has accrued to the province as a result of this first 15% share of the tranche of the IPO, which is going to be dedicated to the Trillium Trust. A billion-dollar dividend was also established just prior to the IPO, again also going to the Trillium Trust, all of which is being used to support the renovations and the investments that we're making in infrastructure.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I take non-answer as acknowledgement that there isn't real cash.

The Hydro One sale gets worse every time you look at it. Ontarians are losing control of an important asset. The non-partisan Financial Accountability Officer says that the deal will leave Ontario worse off than it is today.

We always said that the Premier's Hydro One sell-off was smoke and mirrors. What we didn't recognize—didn't know—was how much smoke would be generated, because now they're counting cash that doesn't exist.

Will the Premier admit that the \$2.2 billion her government claimed would go to transit doesn't actually exist as cash, and explain how much of the transit plan is based on this kind of bad math?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The net result of Hydro One activity is actually a consolidated number that comes into the treasury, of which \$2.2 billion now is being reallocated for a deferred tax benefit, and it's being reinvested and dedicated to the Trillium Trust. As well, an additional billion dollars is being used to pay down debt, which is why we're doing the transaction: to not only have capital gains to be reinvested into new products, new assets, but also to pay down substantive debt, which is, in this case, a billion dollars with this transaction.

It is enabling us to increase the valuation of Hydro One, enabling us now to have a much better and more efficient, reinvigorated operation, which provides greater value to the shareholders, which is the Ontario public. That will enable us to continue fostering greater returns and reinvestment. The FAO noted that very issue and noted that he was not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, I know that our government has made strides in our plan to build Ontario up. In my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, my constituents have noticed our government's progress. In fact, earlier today, I was at the premier cookie manufacturer in Ontario, Cookie It Up, to help with an announcement about growth there.

We've made progress in creating an innovative and dynamic business environment, building modern, public infrastructure such as roads, bridges and transit, and investing in the people of Ontario, in their skills and talents. And finally, we've taken leadership in strengthening retirement income security.

The minister's last update was in the 2015 budget, which was tabled in the spring of last year. Can the Minister of Finance tell this House when he will be providing us with the latest update on our province's progress?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for the question.

As the member has said, our government prepared and delivered details in the 2015 budget to achieve a strong

economic and fiscal plan. I'm happy to announce today that we will provide an update to this plan. It will take place on Thursday, November 26, in this very House, when we table the 2015 fall economic statement.

The 2015 fall economic statement will not only provide an update on the economic and fiscal situation of the province, but we will also report back on the progress we've made towards ensuring greater prosperity for all Ontarians.

I'd like to thank the member for the question, and I look forward to tabling the 2015 fall economic statement on November 26.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. I know I'm speaking on behalf of members when I say that we're very excited to hear the progress our government has made on our plans to improve the everyday lives of Ontarians.

I know the fall economic statement generally provides an update on the province's finances. However, I understand that this statement in particular will be focused on our progress.

Could the minister please provide further details of what we can expect to hear about in the fall economic statement?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question. The fall economic statement will provide an update on the progress of our plan, including fostering an innovative business climate, strengthening income security, building critical public infrastructure, and, more importantly, providing investments made in the people, in Ontarians' talents and skills.

This is a time of fundamental change, and our government is not only embracing that change, we're driving it. The fall economic statement, presented on November 26, will provide an opportunity to report back on the actions that we've taken and where we will continue to achieve and go for more success for the great people of our great province.

TORONTO ISLAND AIRPORT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, over half a million people in the province of Ontario are currently unemployed and looking for work. This government's high-tax and high-debt policies are literally chasing jobs out of Ontario.

Two weeks ago, I wrote to urge the Premier to join her colleague the Minister of the Environment and affirm her support for the proposed Billy Bishop runway extension.

Mr. Speaker, why hasn't the Premier responded to my letter? And more importantly, why hasn't she stood up for the 2,000 well-paying jobs that this important proposal would create?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for this question. I think that he would know—I think

every member in this House would know—that the matter that's being discussed in the question is actually an issue that is the responsibility to work through or work out between the federal government, the city of Toronto and the Toronto Port Authority.

But, of course, this gives me a wonderful opportunity to talk about how important it is that our government continue to proceed with our very ambitious plan to not only build the province up but to support the city of Toronto.

Since 2003, this government has invested billions of dollars in crucial infrastructure to support the city of Toronto. We have a number of projects that this member, I believe, would know are currently under way—for example, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. Just a few weeks ago, we awarded a 30-year contract to Crosslinx Transit Solutions to build that transformational transit project—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: In 2013, the Minister of Transportation at that time, the Honourable Glen Murray, said, "I don't think we ever want to forget what an important economic asset that is and how important that airline is to growing jobs in central Toronto and support for our film and banking industries," and that "the airport is critical to our economy and it's been a positive addition to the economy."

The proposal to extend the runway would create 2,000 well-paying jobs and over \$250 million in annual economic impact. These jobs would help support the Bombardier Downsview plant in Toronto, which recently announced layoffs of 500 people.

The Premier is failing Ontario's workers by not advocating for this important project, but there is still time. We need a willing federal partner. Will the Premier commit today to calling her friend Prime Minister Trudeau and urging him to support this important proposal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you don't have the mike.

Now you do.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, thanks very much.

It's obviously quite ironic that this member from that particular party would talk about having willing federal partners. It's also interesting to me that this member from that caucus talks about 2012 or 2013. In my time in this Legislature, since 2012, year after year, and before that point in time, members in that caucus, from that party, have consistently voted against budgets from this government that included funding to support all of the great things that member is talking about with respect to infrastructure, with respect to creating jobs.

I can't understand why that member would stand and ask this question when they voted against the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. They voted against funding for GO

RER. They voted against funding for the Union Pearson Express. They voted against funding for Toronto's new streetcars.

Again, the irony is a little bit thick in here today, but the people of this province and this city understand exactly where this Premier and our government stand.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. In 2009 and 2010, the government, including the current Premier, voted to support the first two of my five bills to allow municipalities to pass inclusionary zoning bylaws. And yet, when the government released its Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy in late 2010, inclusionary zoning was nowhere to be found.

Last year, the government voted to support a bill by the Liberal member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore which also would allow for inclusionary zoning. As yet, when the government tabled Bill 73 to amend the Planning Act, again, inclusionary zoning was nowhere to be found.

After six years, why hasn't the Premier followed through on her government's repeated pledges to support inclusionary zoning?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the member from Parkdale—High Park. She's been a relentless advocate on a number of files related to social housing and inclusive zoning. I've had several good conversations with her as well as the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore on inclusive zoning.

I want the member opposite to know that we believe it's important that we have a strong housing platform. We're working on it. We're doing a long-term housing strategy, and should we decide to employ inclusive zoning—and we're looking at it very seriously, as the member knows—it would be part of that strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Premier: Three times over the last six years, the Liberal government has voted in this House in support of inclusionary zoning. The chief city planner of Toronto says that Toronto would have an extra 12,000 affordable housing units today if the city had been allowed to pass an inclusionary zoning bylaw five years ago. Instead, the wait-list for affordable housing is now at a record high, with over 168,000 Ontario households. This is a crisis. How much longer will the Premier force Ontarians to wait before she finally honours her government's repeated pledges to support inclusionary zoning?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, I suspect not much longer.

Let me just say that we continue to meet with municipalities, primary stakeholders who have a number of issues and concerns which we're walking through, and also other stakeholders, because if you want to do something like this, particularly if the goal is to house people who need housing, you want to do it right. So should we do it—and I anticipate, knowing that we're looking at it very carefully and strategically. If and when we do it, we'll do it right.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. On Saturday evening, the minister, the member from Trinity—Spadina and I returned from a trade mission to China with the Premier. During this trip, we were able to secure several trade agreements.

My constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt are well aware of the vital role that trade plays in Ontario's economy. China is Ontario's and Canada's second-largest trading partner in the world, and our long-standing and productive relationship with China has generated trade, jobs and economic growth for both regions. In 2014, the two-way trade totalled almost \$40 billion. As such, I'm proud to be part of a government that has targeted strategic connections abroad to continue to add jobs in this province.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please provide an update on the trade deals we secured during the second trade mission to China?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for that question, but more so for her valuable contribution and that of the member from Trinity—Spadina to the overall success of our trip.

I'm very pleased to announce in this Legislature that the Premier's mission to China secured over \$2.5 billion in agreements, which will net this province 1,700 jobs in over 100 agreements overall.

For example, just in the last day in Beijing, we were able to secure three trade agreements between Wing On New Group Canada and JD.com, China Telecom Group and Cross-border wholesale. This agreement alone totalled \$230 million. It's important to note that these companies could have signed agreements with companies and jurisdictions anywhere in the world, but they chose Ontario, and we're proud of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for that very important response.

Ontario's economy must stay competitive in the face of challenging global economic conditions. We can only do this by attracting targeted strategic deals which are suitable for our highly skilled workforce.

One such agreement is Hydrogenics, a Mississauga company which will produce fuel cell technology for zero-emission public transport buses. Another example is Podotech Inc., a Scarborough company that developed a cost-effective 3D foot-scanner, pressure-mapping algo-

rithm for diabetic feet and parametric shoe design software in a matter of minutes.

I'm proud of our government's open ventures for smart, forward-thinking and environmentally friendly companies.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please provide an update to the House on other agreements that we reached in China?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me share a few more examples of some of the important agreements reached on the Premier's mission to China.

We helped secure an \$80-million agreement with China Telecom Group to import food and Canadian nutritional products to China.

Cross-border City Americo Wholesale will purchase \$50 million in Canadian produce over the next three years and open 30 new stores in 2016.

CITIC Capital announced a \$100-million investment toward Paradise, a new attraction and residential development that I know will be very welcome in Niagara Falls.

Shenzhen Bauer Investment Group acquired an 80% share of EDI, a Toronto-based leader in the field of robotics automation. With this acquisition, Shenzhen Bauer intends to create an additional 200 jobs in Ontario.

This Premier and this government are determined to open up Ontario's economy to the global economy. This recent mission will do—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week was Family Doctor Week and many family doctors are quite concerned about patient access to timely health care services. Over 800,000 Ontarians are currently without a family doctor, and these patients are unable to have their health care needs met appropriately.

Ontario is blessed with dedicated and selfless family doctors, but they are facing an uphill battle. Their resources are tapped and they face a growing burden of an aging population requiring complex care, while an additional 140,000 patients enter the health care system each year. As a result, less than half of Ontarians are able to see their primary care provider within 24 hours of getting sick.

Minister, family doctors are wondering why the government's response has been to cut \$800 million from physician services, stop collaborating with OMA and, as reported by the media, threaten to cut doctors' pay.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why he targets and blames doctors for his government's failures?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud of the work that our front-line health care workers, including our doctors, are doing. But I have to correct the member opposite: We have been discussing with the OMA on a regular basis. I met with the president just a few weeks ago, as well. We're prepared to re-enter discussions leading towards an agreement at any time. It's the OMA that, in fact, has

refused to come back to the table to continue those negotiations, but I remain optimistic.

I remain optimistic because the OMA did agree to co-establish with us a table that looks at the future of physician services in this province, to look at issues of compensation, to look at human resources issues, to look at important issues like what Health Quality Ontario released in their report last week in terms of wait times for Ontarians—the sorts of issues which will give confidence to our physicians that we're working together in partnership for a sustainable health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: The relationship between doctors and the government is at an all-time low. This government has twice imposed fee reductions and limited options for practising family doctors. Patients are the ones who are suffering.

To build a sustainable health care system this government must collaborate with front-line health care workers. Instead, we see this government scold doctors in the media, cut resources for patient care and chase away medical residents and students to other jurisdictions.

Can the minister explain to me how blaming and penalizing doctors is helpful to patient care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I quite frankly don't know where to begin. There are so many problems with what the member opposite has just presented here.

First of all, in terms of his allegation of cuts, we're increasing the budget that goes specifically to physician compensation by 1.25% last year, this year and next year as well. There are no cuts; in fact, we're increasing. We're increasing to accommodate the changes in demographics and the growth in our population.

But I want to remain optimistic. I've reached out to the OMA, despite what the member opposite and his position might be, and the position of the opposition party. I've reached out to the OMA. I want to engage them. We're always open to continuing discussions and negotiations, despite a year of negotiations. The OMA, at this moment in time, has refrained from restarting those discussions with us, but I'm optimistic that those discussions will one day bear fruit.

1140

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. People in my riding of Oshawa depend on the region's auto industry. For many families across Ontario, including those in Windsor, London, St. Thomas, Hamilton, Kitchener, St. Catharines and Oshawa, it provides them with a stable paycheque month after month.

Last week, the Premier's privatization czar, Ed Clark, stood up in Toronto and said that the hard-working people of Ontario's manufacturing sector have seen what amounts to a quarter of their paycheque cut under Liberal governments. He even said that "low labour costs are part of [Mexico's] winning formula." It's evident that his definition of a "new day in manufacturing" means leav-

ing people behind and lower-paying manufacturing jobs. That is not what the people of Oshawa or Ontario need or deserve.

Will the Premier commit to standing up for the hard-working people in the province's manufacturing sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is going to want to speak to this, but let me say off the top that that is exactly what we are doing. Our strategy all along has been to invest in, to support and to work with the auto sector and the manufacturing sector at large, to allow it to become the advanced manufacturing sector that will allow us to compete. That's why we've been making investments. That's why we have set up the Jobs and Prosperity Fund and the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. That's why we have been making these investments: to allow the manufacturing sector to go through this transformation.

We're not giving up on the auto sector. We're not giving up on manufacturing. We have expertise in Ontario that is wanted all over the world. We are going to make sure that we have a modern manufacturing sector in this province, and it will include auto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The people in my community of Oshawa are all too familiar with the inaction of consecutive Liberal governments. They have sat on the sidelines while more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared in this province.

The latest numbers from StatsCan show that Ontario saw the largest decline in manufacturing sales in September. What is Ed Clark's answer? Cut job security; slash regulations that protect our workers, our environment and the quality of our products.

Will the Premier commit to creating an auto strategy that leaves no one behind and creates good-paying, stable jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've just spent 19 days of my life out in Japan and China, talking about the competitiveness of Ontario's auto sector. The fact of the matter is, in today's economy, we've attracted \$4.5 billion in 12 months alone to Ontario's auto sector, including significant investments from GM, who are investing with 100 new engineers in their innovation centre. We're building the auto sector in today's economy, but we also want a healthy auto sector in tomorrow's economy, which is just around the corner. That's why we're investing in innovation. That's why we need to be a leader in connected vehicles, a leader in artificial intelligence, a leader in sensors. We are and we will continue to be, so that we can build the auto sector jobs of today and tomorrow, even if the NDP want to live in the past.

SERVICES FOR SENIORS

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

Ontario is home to some of the most dynamic and innovative colleges in the country. It is imperative that our colleges, with help from our government, provide students with the necessary skills and training they need to succeed in today's competitive labour market. It is equally important that colleges continue to be responsive to the different economic and demographic changes that are taking shape in our province. Minister, I understand that our government is collaborating in new ways with our college partners to support seniors in Ontario.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please inform the members of the House on how colleges are preparing students to meet the emerging labour market needs in seniors' communities across the province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to say merci beaucoup to the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting high-quality post-secondary education for Ontarians. Ontario's colleges currently operate a range of specialized programs that serve to fill local labour market needs and prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow.

My ministry recently approved a new retirement community management graduate certificate program at Algonquin College. This program is a strong example of how Ontario colleges are working with their communities and creating innovative programs to meet these emerging needs. With over two million seniors in Ontario, I am pleased that this program will enable students to learn and apply management skills in retirement communities across the province of Ontario.

Our government will continue to support our colleges in developing new and innovative programs that will make the lives of Ontarians better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'd like to applaud the minister for his commitment to investing in a strong and qualified labour force that is responsive to the local needs of communities in Ontario, particularly in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans, where there is a significant aging population.

The minister responsible for seniors affairs recently announced the launch of a graduate program in retirement community management in Ottawa. I had the pleasure of working in the retirement sector for 15 years, and as a former co-owner of a retirement residence in one of the largest and fastest-growing regions in Ontario with a demand for larger and new retirement residences, this innovative program will be particularly important to me.

There are numerous challenges and opportunities surrounding safety, health and inclusion that accompany retirement community management and require specific skills. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please inform this House on how working together with colleges to introduce programs like these will help provide the best care and support for seniors in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Minister responsible for seniors affairs.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I was delighted to be in Ottawa for the official launch of the new graduate program. As

minister, I recognize the dynamic opportunity to work with Ontario colleges to support seniors in new and innovative ways.

Our government supports this program and supports prospective students planning to pursue careers in the management of retirement communities and improve the lives of Ontario seniors at the same time. This seniors program is specifically designed to align with the Ontario Retirement Homes Act, legislation that our government created to regulate care and safety standards for seniors in retirement homes.

Ontario's booming senior population has spurred an exceptionally high employment demand for qualified management professionals in this industry. We continue to support this initiative by Ontario colleges with investment and support for what they're doing for the seniors in Ontario.

LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Labour. There is a sense of chaos and uncertainty at home due to job cuts and work stoppages at major provincial employers. I've spoken about the 350 front-line health care workers, including more than 100 nurses that this government has fired at our hospital, but now the government has also fired 54 workers at Nipissing University, including 22 professors.

The Nipissing University students have been without classes for two weeks as the faculty strike wears on. But this government has also fired 43 workers at Ontario Northland, and now they're in a lockout.

These provincial actions are hurting Nipissing families, students, seniors and businesses. My question is, what is the government doing to resolve these disputes?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for the question. The government of Ontario is very proud of the record of labour peace that we've enjoyed in the province when you compare it to other jurisdictions. When you look at the number of agreements that are made throughout the province of Ontario, you realize that over 98% of those agreements are reached without a strike, without a lockout.

The labour peace that's been enjoyed by this province is a result of relationships that we have been able to build with both labour and employers in the province of Ontario. We have a record, sir, that's second to none, I think, when it comes to labour peace. We work with both sides. Both sides view this government as a government that values the relationship that it has with either. We plan to continue. We know that the best agreement you could possibly reach is one that's reached between the parties. We attempt to facilitate that. We've got the best mediators in the country. We reach the best agreements in the country.

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: I'm not sure about labour peace—because I'm receiving email on a

daily basis from Nipissing University students and parents. They're concerned that the students may not be able to complete their semesters.

Meanwhile, workers, friends and families are out protesting the hospital cuts every single week.

And at Ontario Northland, Unifor's national president became involved and laid this lockout firmly at the feet of the Premier and the Liberal government.

Despite the fact that, as the Deputy Premier said, the government has run out of money, they found billions to waste on gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meter scandals.

My question is, how long will the minister let these disruptions drag out?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again for the supplementary.

As I said, we're proud of the record here in the province of Ontario. Ninety-eight per cent of the labour contracts in Ontario are settled without any disruption at all.

When we made the decision to keep four of the five business lines of the ONTC in public hands, we made it very clear, I think, to everybody in Ontario that labour is a critical component of transforming the ONTC's long-term relationships because we need to support that case of public ownership.

Speaker, agreements have been reached with other bargaining agents as we've moved through that process. The ONTC management has tabled final offers with Unifor. I know that Unifor, which is a very highly valued, integral part of the labour community in the province, is taking a look at those, is working hard. I suspect that if both groups work together at the table, an agreement can be reached in both cases.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Last week, management at the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission locked out workers at its repair shops across the north—in Cochrane and North Bay—a move overturned by the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Now they're locked out again after negotiators for the company—or the government, basically—walked away from the table.

First, the government ends train service. Then they cut back bus routes. Now they're strong-arming workers. Northerners are getting the feeling that they fought to take ONTC—to force the government to take them off the auction block, and now it seems they're putting them on the chopping block.

Is this government actually determined to destroy public transportation in northern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate having the opportunity to speak. The Minister of Labour just spoke very well to the same issue.

The fact is, Speaker, when our government, under Premier Wynne's leadership, made the decision, after much

consultation with northerners, to keep four of the five business lines of the ONTC in public hands, that was a proud moment, and it continues to be a proud moment.

We are committed to transforming the ONTC to ensure sustainable employment, continued economic growth and a strong transportation network in northeastern Ontario. But it is also important, and we've made it clear, that a critical component of transforming the ONTC for long-term sustainability, certainly, is supporting a continued case for public ownership. We need to have the labour agreements in place, and there have been some that have been put in place.

I am optimistic that, as we respect the collective bargaining process, we'll continue to carry forward and that, hopefully, they'll be back to the table and agreements will be put in place—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A subtle reminder: When I stand, you sit. You've got to look over this way every now and then.

VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take this opportunity to welcome Tony Iannuzzi, Kevin Hoy and Nikki Holland, who are members of the Carpenters Union. They're visiting Queen's Park today.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Mr. Bill Ferguson, in our gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Greg Killough from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. It has been a pleasure working with Greg on a private member's bill that I'm going to be introducing a bit later on this afternoon, the Smoke-Free Schools Act. Welcome, Greg, to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Parents across Ontario are raising the alarm after finding that their children have been exposed to extremely inappropriate material while at school. Recently, children at publicly funded schools in the Cambridge region, as early as grade 2, have unintentionally accessed images and videos of graphic pornography as well as obscene and racist jokes on school computers, school wi-fi and during school time.

In this case, there is an administrative policy in place that says that the board's first responsibility is to provide

filtering protection for Internet access which will restrict material that is inappropriate and is racist, pornographic, dangerous or obscene. Teachers reported that Internet filtration has become lax over the last two years.

One such petition has been started at waterlooregionsafeschools.com. These parents want board staff to take their concerns more seriously and do more to restrict access to this material. We can't expect children as young as seven and eight years old to moderate their own Internet use responsibly. Parents expect that Internet filters and supervision will be in place in our public schools to prevent their children from being exposed to this type of material.

I urge all school boards across Ontario to take action to ensure that strict Internet safety filters and supervision are in place.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Last Wednesday, people across Ontario and across Canada paid their respects to our veterans: the men and women who sacrificed their health and safety and, sometimes, lives to provide a peaceful and safe country for us to live and work in. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the remembrance ceremony at the Windsor cenotaph due to an unexpected and unfortunate family emergency.

While riding his bike to school in the morning, my son was hit by a car. My son had the right of way; he did not have a stop sign. Although the driver did as he should and came to a complete stop, he did not see my son when advancing through the intersection and hit him. My son was thrown from his bike, rolled up the hood of the car and, when the driver slammed on his brakes, my son was thrown to the ground.

I am happy to report that my son received the best of care from the paramedics and police officers that arrived on scene, as well as from one of our local hospitals. He was battered and bruised but not seriously injured. The driver of the vehicle, although understandably shaken, is doing just fine as well.

I mention this incident to, once again, bring awareness of the importance that all cyclists, regardless of age, wear helmets and be aware of all their surroundings. Motorists also need to be ever vigilant when on our streets. In a split second, someone's life can be dramatically altered, and nobody wants to read in the news that another cyclist was badly injured or killed while cycling our streets.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'd like to share with the House some good news with regard to the redevelopment of Etobicoke General Hospital, but before I do that—speaking on the healing arts—I, too, would like to offer my condolences for what took place.

Je voudrais prendre la parole pour exprimer nos condoléances à nos frères et soeurs de Paris, et au peuple et à la nation de France. Nous sommes avec vous.

I'm pleased to alert my colleagues, constituents and residents about what is going to be, perhaps, a multi-million-dollar—I think we're not really supposed to specify the exact amount, but I think it's going to be a \$200-million-plus Etobicoke General development. We're going to be tripling to quadrupling the floor space. This will involve a larger, state-of-the-art emergency department; a critical care unit and an intensive care unit that are, by the way, four times the size of the current space; a maternal newborn unit with birthing suites and a specialized nursery; a new ambulatory procedures unit; and cardiorespiratory and neurodiagnostic services. That means more dialysis, more cardiac stress tests, more nuclear scans and more radiology of all different kinds, hopefully to improve the health, diagnostic capability and the health outcomes for my residents in Etobicoke North.

Of course, I'm pleased to be joined with moral support from the member from Etobicoke Centre, who is strategically located behind me, who was also present. I won't share with you, because that would of course be using props, but I do have photographic evidence of the announcement.

JEWISH WOMEN'S RETREAT

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yesterday, I spent a bit of time with ladies at a Jewish Women's Retreat. It was actually in Markham. A lot of people were from Thornhill, Toronto and across the USA and Canada.

It was a very exciting weekend, and very inspirational—the 54th convention of its kind. It's basically a gathering of women from the chabad community. "Chabad" is pronounced "kh," so I want you all to practise and get ready for Hanukkah because that's just around the corner.

Some of the speakers—one of them was actually here this morning. She is the wife of the late Knesset Minister Avner Shaki. She was here today—Nechama Shaki—for question period. She didn't make it quite through, but she sat there for most of it. I'm sure she has a few words to say about all of us.

Faygie Kaplan, the wife of the famous Rabbi Kaplan from Chabad Flamingo in Thornhill, was a speaker, and Jordana Stockhamer—whose daughter went to school with my daughter—also from Thornhill, a lawyer. Betty Barmherzig spoke—she does exercises for religious Jewish women and was a patient of mine when I worked as an optometrist; Rabbi Yossi Jacobson; Miryam Swerdlow; Rabbi Avraham Plotkin from Chabad at Green Lane in Markham; Mrs. Sarah Chana Radcliffe; Mrs. Michèle Sankar; Deeca Ziv-Katz, who was in the Israeli army; Marcy Katz, who believes we have the power to change our moods; and Shulamit Finkelstein, who helps people cope with stress.

HEARTLAND FOREST

Mr. Wayne Gates: Today, I'd like to talk about an incredibly moving experience I had in my riding. Anyone

from Niagara knows about Heartland Forest and the incredible work they do for children in our region.

Last week, I was happy to stop by Heartland Forest and witness their incredible workshop in action. It was an area on a property where children and adults of all ages and abilities are being taught carpentry. They have programs for young people with autism. They have programs for adults with brain injuries who need occupational therapy.

Just last week, they launched a brand new, full-day program for young people with autism. What's better than being taught these skills by retired teachers who have volunteered their time to help those who need it the most? It highlights how important these teachers are in our community and the difference they make in the lives of our young people, both inside and outside the classroom. The work that comes out of the workshops gives these incredibly inspiring children and adults a chance to create something they're proud of.

I'm also happy to say that the program is funded by the Ontario Trillium Benefit—just one great example of the positive role that we, as government, can play in our communities by reaching out to those with disabilities.

I want to send a sincere thank you to Heartland Forest and their founder, Dan Bouwman, for the work they do in Niagara and our community. What they offer is priceless, and I'm extremely proud to support these efforts as a member of this Legislature.

DIWALI

Mr. Bob Delaney: Last week, the Indian community celebrated Diwali, the festival of light. Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and also many Buddhists around the world lit candles and set off fireworks, signifying the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.

Diwali, like Christmas, is a religious festival. It commemorates the homecoming of Ram after 14 years of exile in the forests and his victory over Ravan.

Celebrants mark Diwali with prayers, the lighting of divas, fireworks and the sharing of sweets and gifts.

In the Sikh community, this day is celebrated as Bandi Choor Diwas. The Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib-Ji, was freed on this day in 1619 from imprisonment in the famous fort of Gwalior by Emperor Jahangir. Guru Sahib negotiated his release, and that of 52 kings and princes, to coincide with Diwali.

1310

In the past two weeks in western Mississauga, my office hosted our first community Diwali reception. I attended the Hindu Heritage Centre's Diwali Milan, and Ram Mandir's Diwali fundraiser and gala. The Gujarati community celebrates the day of Diwali as New Year, and I joined my many Gujarati friends at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir. And I attended the Diwali party hosted by my many friends at the Mississauga Seniors Club.

Shubh Diwali, or happy Diwali to all.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to talk about the need for protections for people living in what are known as land-lease communities. These communities are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act; however, they are exempt from the protection of rent controls under that act.

In my riding of Simcoe—Grey, many residents in Wasaga Beach are worried that the affordable lifestyle homes they purchased in land-lease communities won't be affordable over the long term.

In the Parkbridge Lifestyles Communities where they live, they report annual rental increases in the last few years of 3.3% to 4%. As well, they report monthly rental fee increases of \$50 every time a property is sold to a new owner. And they say that they've seen maintenance fees increase as much as 15% or more a year.

These increases aren't sustainable. Residents are worried they will no longer be able to afford their homes. They also worry that the increases will make the properties less attractive to potential buyers. On top of it all, the residents say the rationale for the increases is not transparent. They don't get a good explanation from the owners of the property.

My constituents purchased their homes thinking they would be a great place to live. They thought they would enjoy a certain quality of life, a high quality of life, and a lifestyle that they've worked hard for many years to achieve.

The government needs to ensure that people living in land-lease communities are treated in a transparent and responsible manner.

LINDA SMITH

Mr. John Fraser: This past weekend in Ottawa, a friend to many, Linda Smith, passed away. She touched our lives as a volunteer for politicians of all stripes. Linda had a developmental exceptionality. That exceptionality filled her with unconditional love and acceptance in abundance. She would call our office daily, sometimes several times, just to check in. I know this happened in offices across our city.

More than one person has said that you could be having a terrible day and Linda would call and you'd forget your troubles. Linda could lift up all those around her. At regular council meetings, she often sat in the front row, waiting for the mayor to acknowledge her. She also loved to have her picture taken with just about anyone.

Linda would help out with any task in the office, especially if it came with lunch. Two slices of pizza, one to take home, and a Pepsi. She loved strawberry milkshakes and ice cream. She was great company.

Her exceptionality also left her vulnerable, and she struggled with how people could be cruel, mean and thoughtless. Thankfully, she was resilient and quick to forgive.

Linda, you were our friend and we're the better for it. You truly brought out the best in all of us. We will all miss you. God bless.

ATTACKS IN PARIS

ATTENTATS À PARIS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak about the recent tragic events in Paris, France. The attacks on Paris are devastating, and our thoughts are with the innocent victims and their families.

Les scènes de mort, de destruction et de terreur étaient horribles et inoubliables. C'est un rappel tragique que la vie est très précieuse.

The scenes of death, destruction and terror were horrific and unforgettable. It is a tragic reminder that life is so precious. In the wake of these violent events, it is important to remember that these acts of terror were carried out by a small group of people who promote violence and hatred.

That is why I find the attacks on a local mosque in Peterborough unsettling. This is a time to demonstrate compassion and solidarity for everyone in our communities. This is a time to be proud of our diversity and the strength of our shared values. This is a time to be proud of our religious harmony in Ontario and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, across Ontario and Canada, vigils were held this weekend to show support for the French people and their government. Among them were an emotional gathering at Celebration Square in Mississauga and a sombre vigil in the heart of Toronto in Dundas Square.

These acts of terror are an attack not only on the innocent victims in Paris, but on the values we all share worldwide. They are an attack on democracy, freedom and multiculturalism. The loss of life experienced around the world last week in Paris and many other countries was a blow to humanity.

Finally, it is a time to remember those who face such terrible losses in France and to stand in solidarity with the French people and the pillars that that community was built on: liberté, égalité, fraternité.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE SCHOOLS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 FAVORISANT DES ÉCOLES SANS FUMÉE

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Tobacco Tax Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée et la Loi de la taxe sur le tabac.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Todd Smith: The explanatory note is quite long. I've been working on this for several months.

I'll just summarize it by saying that the bill increases the fines for the import, manufacture and transportation of illegal cigarettes. It includes an education piece as well to inform our young people about the dangers of smoking illegal smokes. The Smoke-Free Schools Act is a serious crackdown on contraband cigarettes in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very proud to stand in the House today on behalf of Ontario's two million students to acknowledge Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

We know that a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment is essential for student achievement and well-being. We are proud that school communities across the province are working hard to promote respectful and caring relationships and interactions during Bullying Awareness and Prevention week and all year long.

As you may know, promoting well-being is one of the goals of our government's renewed vision for education, Achieving Excellence. Ontario is leading the country with strong legislation and evidence-informed resources to address bullying and victimization through prevention and intervention. For example, the Accepting Schools Act, which was passed in 2012, requires school boards to take measures to prevent and address inappropriate student behaviour. This important legislation is helping to make every school in Ontario a safe, inclusive and accepting place to learn, while at the same time ensuring that every student has the support to reach their full potential.

Another way we are promoting well-being is through the updated health and physical education curriculum. From a very early age, students will learn to demonstrate respect for all and understand the root causes of gender inequality, while also building skills for developing healthy relationships.

Our safe and accepting schools teams, which are required in all Ontario schools, are helping to create a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate for our students all across the province. Speaker, you will recall that the 2014-15 Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools recognized Ontario's safe and accepting school teams for the exceptional and innovative work they have done. For the 2014-15 school year, 10 school teams were selected as recipients for these initiatives.

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One such school is St. Alfred Catholic Elementary School in St. Catharines, which launched its Caught You Caring bullying prevention campaign. This recognized

individual students throughout the school for their positive choices and impact on their school.

Another school, École élémentaire catholique Lamoureux in Ottawa, responded to the challenge of creating a positive student climate with its Stop, Walk, and Talk campaign. In fact, a school climate survey at école Lamoureux revealed that more than 97% of students felt strongly that they were helped, supported, respected and felt safe at school, and the school has experienced a marked drop in bullying incidents over the past two years.

I encourage every member in the House today and in our school communities to take this opportunity, not just during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week but throughout the school year, to promote respectful and healthy relationships, to take a stand against bullying, and to come together to make a difference in the lives of Ontario's children, students, families, and educators.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise today on behalf of my leader, Patrick Brown, to recognize this week as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

I would like to start by thanking my former colleague, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, who has been a champion in the fight against bullying. In 2010, she introduced a resolution calling on the government to recognize the third week of November each year as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. In addition to her resolution, she introduced a private member's bill in 2011 to strengthen anti-bullying laws in schools.

I also want to thank Lisa MacLeod, the member for Nepean-Carleton, who has also been a champion in our caucus against bullying. In 2012, she brought forward legislation to recognize the third Sunday in November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in schools, including establishing a plan to prevent bullying in school boards.

I want to thank them both for their efforts to highlight how bullying is impacting our communities. There is no doubt that bullying is a serious issue that continues in our society, and especially in our schools, having serious implications in the lives of our students.

There are many forms of bullying, whether it is about a person's race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, intellect and/or physical disabilities, and no longer is bullying confined to classrooms and schoolyards. Even in workplaces, bullying exists, and with social media, bullying has easy access to individuals no matter where they are. Now bullying can take place right in a person's home, digitally.

Cyber-bullying is the new modern-day plague, quickly spreading. For example, at least one in three adolescents in Canada has reported being bullied recently, and nearly half of all parents across Canada report having a child who is a victim of bullying. To highlight this even more, a child or teen is bullied every seven minutes on play-

grounds throughout Canada. Bullying has serious effects on the lives of our province's children.

Victims of harassment report a loss of interest in school activities, more absenteeism, lower-quality school work, lower grades, more skipping and dropping classes, tardiness and truancy.

To make matters worse, more than half of bullied children do not report being bullied to a teacher. When the majority of victims of bullying do not want to talk about their experience, they will resort to other means to cope with it, and in some cases it can lead to suicide. Suicide should never become an option for coping.

That is why we need to do a better job of teaching children, if they are being bullied, to please reach out and talk to someone. Programs like the Kids Help Phone are there for you. We need to ensure that victims of bullying know that there is always someone out there to talk to. We need to teach family members, teachers and employers how to spot the signs that someone is being bullied.

I want to commend the Police Association of Ontario for teaming up with Kids Now Canada in the "Pink is the New Blue" campaign to help raise awareness for the use of social media, in which parents, caregivers, officers and teachers can take an online quiz on how to identify potential situations and on how to listen to a child if they are being bullied. When we are able to teach individuals to spot the warning signs of someone being bullied, then we are better preparing them to deal with the situation appropriately.

Here at Queen's Park, we must show leadership by working together to put an end to all forms of bullying.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: On behalf of all Ontario New Democrats, I am proud to rise today to speak to Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

Forms of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour with the intention to cause physical or emotional harm, known as bullying, are sadly all too common in Ontario. Bullying impacts all aspects of life in this province. Seniors, students, special needs citizens, transgender youth and visible minorities—sadly, anyone, Speaker—may experience bullying directly or indirectly. This aggressive and damaging behaviour can take place in the workplace, home, school or in the general public.

Each generation of Ontarians is faced with new forms of bullying. In 2015, bullying has taken to cyberspace and occurs on varying public forums such as our social media platforms. As bullying increasingly involves new technology, so too must the individual seeking to stop this behaviour and to assist those living in fear or distress.

Bringing individuals together to form community-based approaches to end bullying is a proven tactic to make real change. It is this community response that is the key to our success in reducing all forms of bullying, new and old.

For instance, the Windsor police took part in the Yellowcard campaign that seeks to end intellectual discrimination. This campaign was launched by Special

Olympics athletes working in conjunction with local police forces across Canada.

Each year, Windsor's Hiatus House takes part in the Shine the Light campaign in partnership with organizations and businesses across our community to raise awareness on the lack of domestic violence reporting. On my way back to Queen's Park this week, I had the opportunity to stop in London, and I noticed many of the private businesses and public institutions were taking part in the Shine the Light campaign: Their buildings were lit up in purple. Speaker, this campaign actually takes place across our province to bring awareness to the lack of reporting on domestic violence.

Another local initiative is the Essex County Diversion Program. Through its youth outreach initiative, the diversion program seeks to raise awareness of activities that can be attributed to bullying and accepts referrals from parents and schools. I hope this program can continue to partner with the community and offer its services.

Across Ontario, the parents, education workers, and students who make up our education communities are leaders in bullying awareness and prevention. In the past, school-based initiatives in Windsor, like H.J. Lassaline Catholic Elementary School's Bully Busters program or Catholic Central's Delete Day, have increased awareness and reduced forms of bullying in schools.

It is the hard work of our education community that delivers the ministry and school board directives aimed at bullying prevention that the minister spoke of today. Whether the anti-bullying initiative is a directive of the ministry, the board, or a grassroots campaign at a local school, our education workers and principals are foundational to bullying prevention inside and outside the classroom. These education workers go above and beyond what is required of them each and every day to deliver on these directives and so much more. Their input is vital to measuring the impact and success of these programs.

We need to recognize the value that education workers voluntarily bring each and every day to Ontario students through anti-bullying initiatives. This is why Ontario families are so troubled by the divisive tactics this government has used over the past several months to divide our education community. Most recently, we see this by the government granting boards the ability to reduce the pay of our education professionals in an attempt to force education support staff into submission in an ongoing labour dispute.

While the government issued an ultimatum, they have yet to give support staff the courtesy of setting more dates to bargain, have their concerns heard, and reach a tentative agreement. It is shameful that this government is pitting school boards against education workers and against parents, all in an attempt to get its way.

Speaker, we need a cohesive and united community of parents, students and education workers if our efforts to curb behaviour and assist the victims of bullying are to be effective. The government should work to unite this community rather than pit members against one another.

Only through a united education community will we be successful in ending new forms of bullying in this province. We need this government to recognize this and start working to unite this community rather than create divides.

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PETITIONS

TENANT PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not to assume anything, but I think the member from Simcoe-Grey is going to lead us in petitions.

The member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's very attentive of you. Residents of Country Meadows, Wasaga Beach, Ontario, sent us this petition:

"Whereas our present land leases with Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc. are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA); however, they are exempted from the protection of rent controls under the act. Being part 1, section 6, subsection 2, and,

"Whereas the landlord has the option to increase the monthly land rental by \$50 above the existing rent, to a new purchaser, when a home is sold.

"Whereas 'Country Meadows' is a community of permanent homes located on leased lands whose residents are retired and living on fixed incomes. Continued rental increases beyond the guidelines of the RTA, is unsustainable to retired residents on fixed incomes.

"Therefore, we the undersigned residents of 'Country Meadows,' petition the Legislature to change the RTA to include rent controls for retirement type communities located on leased lands and, to delete the option given to landlords to increase land rental rates upon sale of a home in such communities. The foregoing would enable retirees to remain in their homes and enjoy their hard-earned retirement years."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the over 1,000 residents of these communities in Wasaga Beach for the petition. I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from Mrs. Sadie Paquette, who lives in Chelmsford in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel" this;

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Hannah to take it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. John Fraser: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and am giving it to page Jack.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Todd Smith: I've been inundated with calls and messages from hunters who have dealt with a lot of ticks in eastern Ontario, so this is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but the scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

“Whereas the public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To request that the Minister of Health direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it and send it to the table.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for improved post-stroke physiotherapy and eligibility.

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

“Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

“Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

“Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

“Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it with page Aislin.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas repeated cuts to health care funding under the present government are having a negative impact on the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, including seniors, diabetics and those suffering from eye or cardiovascular conditions; and

“Whereas the heart rehabilitation program at the Seaway Valley Health Centre provided a valuable service for many residents; and

“Whereas it is in everyone’s interest to help all Ontarians stay healthy and prevent the occurrence of acute and dangerous conditions, such as heart failure; and

“Whereas this interest is best served through adequate funding to programs that have proven their value;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take all necessary actions to restore the heart rehab program at the Seaway Valley Health Centre.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Rachael.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Kevin Conley, who lives in Sudbury. It goes as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Aislin to bring it to the Clerk.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

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"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I'll sign this and send it to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Oshawa; I apologize.

Mr. John Fraser: Which is in Durham.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Which is in Durham, yes.

I am pleased to read this petition to the Legislative Assembly from constituents across the Durham region, specifically Pamela Downward from Pickering.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

Of course, I support this petition, I affix my name to it and send it with Megan Faith.

HOSPICE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario; and

"Whereas Matthews House Hospice is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and among the lowest-funded in the province, even though it serves as many clients or more than other hospices that receive greater provincial support; and

"Whereas Matthews House has been told by the Central LHIN that LHINs do not fund residential hospice operational costs and yet hospices in other LHINs, including Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen

Sound and now Collingwood, all receive operational funding from the province; and

"Whereas in February 2010 Matthews House Hospice was promised a solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN which has never materialized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Wynne government immediately develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with hospice funding to ensure that people in south Simcoe and all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life care."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast and it is signed by Mr. Glen Rahn, who is from Capreol in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ajay to bring it to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Auditor General confirmed in his December 2012 report that the Champlain CCAC had the longest wait time in Ontario in which 90% of their clients were placed; and

"Whereas the region requires a comprehensive plan assessing the future long-term-care bed needs of the region, as well as the provision of community care for independent and semi-independent seniors; and

"Whereas the number of Ontarians over 75 years of age is projected to increase by 30% by 2021, the year the baby boomers start to turn 75 years old, putting even more demand on the number of available LTC beds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately conduct a study to identify the current and future requirements for long-term-care beds and community care for independent and semi-independent

seniors in our region of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, including the city of Cornwall.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Ross.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities...; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of” Ontario Works and ODSP; and

“Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities ... who work; and

“Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds...; and

“Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by...; and

“Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry’s goal ...;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government’s plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Hannah to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to defer the remainder of our leadoff debate till a further date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Simcoe—Grey is seeking unanimous consent of the

House to defer the remainder of the leadoff speech for the official opposition to a later date. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate? The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, as you know, our critics for energy are currently in committee, so I too would request that our lead for this particular bill be deferred to another date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins—James Bay is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to defer the leadoff speech for the New Democratic Party on this particular bill. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll start. Nobody else wants to go; I'll be the first one.

Man, this is a really bad way of dealing with legislation, I must say. Like the House leader for the Conservatives, I've been here for some years now. Normally, there's a little bit of a chance for members to be able to get a bill in order to be able to read it, in order to understand it, in order to, hopefully, consult with people who may be affected by it, so that we can have a meaningful debate in this Legislature.

Instead, the government introduced this bill just a short time ago and then told us at the last minute that they're going to call it for debate this afternoon. Fair enough. They have the right to do that. They are the government. They did win a majority in the last election, and the government House leader controls the agenda of the House. I get it. But, God, it's not a good way of doing things.

As you look at this particular bill—I've only had a chance to read the explanatory notes and I've read about half of the bill, and I've got more questions about this bill than I have had about a whole bunch of others. If I understand what the government is doing here, it simply is that they're taking away—we created, under the Conservatives, a number of agencies in the electricity sector: the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, which was there before, but they were given a new mandate, and the IESO, the people who essentially approve projects in the energy sector, and others. These people who had the responsibility to manage the growth and the changes in the electricity system had a process that they had to go through that was somewhat transparent. It probably wasn't as good as people would like. I know that on a number of projects, people showed up at community meetings in my riding in order to deal with some of the projects that were brought forward. But people did have a right, because those agencies had a responsibility under law to consult and to go out and to do hearings on a particular project.

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So let's say, for example, there would be an application to build a new transmission line between Sudbury and Timmins. Something like that would be subject to an environmental assessment, and there would also have to be hearings by the Ontario Energy Board in order to say, “Here's what we plan on doing. Here's what we think it's

going to look like." Then people would come and have their say, and say, "Hey, what a great idea," or, "What a bad idea," and, if it's great or bad, give the reasons why. It's a process within a democracy that allows people to have a say about how their public utility system is being designed and being managed and being operated in a way that makes some sense.

If I understand this legislation correctly—correct me if I'm wrong—essentially what they're doing is giving the minister all of the power to do the planning, all of the power to tell the OEB, the IESO and others what he or she wants in his or her plan, when it has to be done, and all of the details of whatever it is. There's no accountability, because from what I can see in here, the right to an environmental assessment on projects like that is taken away in this legislation. I hope that, in the time that we have this bill at second reading, people will get a chance to read this bill and have that discussion a little bit greater. But that is troubling. We went through it on the Green Energy Act when it came to the windmills or the solar farms that were built across Ontario.

The idea of going green is a great idea. Who's going to argue with greening your electricity system? I don't think anybody opposes the concept in itself. But there has to be a public process by which the public buys in.

If there was one criticism, especially in rural Ontario and somewhat in northern Ontario—but in rural Ontario mostly—about the process, it's that it took away the ability of the public to really have their say. Municipalities couldn't, within their own boundaries, do anything about those projects as they were being planned, and the environmental assessment process was really null and void, if I'm correct.

Now what they're doing is saying, under this new private hydro that they're creating—because they're essentially privatizing hydro. They're taking a public utility that we used to own 100%, and over a period of time the government is selling 60%. The government says that they're going to still control electricity and they're going to still control Hydro One with that particular setup. But you know as well as I do that if you sell 60% of your business, you don't call the shots anymore. Everybody in the business world knows that. Everybody who works for a business knows that. The public knows that. If you don't have 50% plus 1% of the business, you're not in control.

What this bill does, under this new hydro system—it says that if the new Hydro One or whatever they call themselves decide that they're going to build a transmission project wherever or they're going to change a substation wherever or they're going to build God knows what on the generation side, it's not subject to an environmental assessment. Wow. What happened to the progressive Liberals who ran in the last election? I remember that those Liberals, Kathleen Wynne and others, were out there campaigning, "Oh, we're the progressive ones. We believe in doing the right thing. We want to have conversations with Ontarians. We're transparent." Transparent? You're putting the blinders on Ontarians with legislation like this. I can't believe it.

I hope I'm wrong. I'm sure there's going to be a government member, learned scholars that they are on this legislation—because God knows they must have read it before I got it, because we just got this bill—who is going to maybe point this wrong. But I don't think I'm wrong. If you take a look at what the bill says and the explanatory notes and you read what it says inside the bill itself, it's pretty darn clear. It makes changes to section 25 of the bill, and it says it "is re-enacted to provide the power for the minister, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council"—that's cabinet—"to issue directives to the IESO and to the boards that set out requirements respecting the implementation of the long-term energy plan." Well, essentially, the minister draws up the energy plan.

Mr. John Vanthof: A Liberal energy plan. What could go wrong?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What could go wrong with a Liberal energy plan? What a good point. What could go wrong with a Liberal energy plan in this province? God. Do you remember the gas plant scandal and everything else that these guys have done?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Smart meters.

It further goes on to say—and I was just reading this particular part before I got the chance to get up—that, essentially, the environment assessment process is sort of made null and void. It says, "Section 25.32.1 is enacted to specify that no plan, directive, direction or other document issued or provided under sections 25.29 to 25.32 is an undertaking to which the Environmental Assessment Act applies."

So you've got to go and read what those sections from 25.29 to 25.32 mean, and that's a pretty wide swath that you're giving yourself when it comes to exempting projects that essentially go under the Environmental Assessment Act. If the government makes a plan—for example, the minister makes a plan for his friends, like that banker friend he has, Mr. Clark, the new unelected Liberal member of cabinet—if he decides he wants to—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, he's an unelected member of your cabinet. He has more sway than most ministers. I see things that he says in the paper, and the government goes out and does them. So he's an unelected cabinet minister with a lot of power. It's obvious what's going on there.

But if he says, "Hey, Liberal cabinet or Premier Wynne, I would like you to do X, Y and Z," who knows? This could be subject to abuse. For example, "If you guys do this, we'll give you money for your fundraisers." I don't know: That may happen; that may not happen. Let's hope not, but it could. The potential is there. You could end up in a situation where the government essentially designs the rules of the proponent. So if you're friends with the proponent and the government decides that it's got the ability to draft the rules, I think that's a pretty dangerous spot to be in.

That's why it is always better to shed light on whatever we do when it comes to things like this, because

light is the best disinfectant when it comes to making sure you don't do something that's dirty and wrong. I think, as a result of everything we've seen with this government when it comes to the energy file, if you look at everything when it came to those gas plants: the cancellation of gas plants not for the need of making sure we're doing the right thing when it comes to the energy system in Ontario, but the need of the Liberal government to protect a couple of seats—five in total, if I remember correctly—and get people re-elected, it worked. They got their people re-elected.

Mr. Arthur Potts: You guys made the same promise.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen: It worked. It worked. Member from Beaches East-York, I don't say that it didn't work. You got your members re-elected, but it cost us—the Ontarians—over \$1.2 billion for what you guys have done.

I'm saying, my God, what kind of system is that? We're going to give the government the ability to essentially take the Environmental Assessment Act process away from certain activities in the energy sector such as developing the plan for what your energy system is going to look like? Oh my God, can you imagine?

We just went through this with the Energy East pipeline, right? There are people on both sides of that issue—people in favour and people opposed—and the OEB held hearings in Ontario so that people could have a discussion about, "Should that project go forward: yes? Should it go forward: no? And if yes or if no, give your reasons." The OEB came back and gave its report, and now people have to go back and deal with some of the concerns that were raised on that particular project.

Well, what I'm seeing here is that something like that would be pretty hard to happen unless the government wanted to have a public process. Certainly the government retains the right, as I read the legislation, to be able to have a public process hearing of some type, in order to give the public their say, because there is a section in this bill that refers to the minister having the ability to create a public consultation process on development of his or her energy plan—clearly. But it's not an independent process driven by some outside body that is a third party and is not tied to the decision. That's what a review process is supposed to be all about. That would be like saying, "Well, you know, you just charged somebody, and let me tell you: I, the prosecution, or I, the defence, am going to pick all the jurors." I can tell you what's going to happen with the decision: If you get to pick the jurors, the jurors are going to do what you want.

You have to have a system where there are some checks and balances, and the checks and balances in the system are to make sure that it's transparent. What the government seems to be doing with this bill—and I've got to say, it's going to take a little bit of time to go through and read this bill, and certainly we need people to come and speak to this in committee who are knowledgeable on the energy sector—is that this bill seems to essentially give the minister the power to determine what an energy plan is going to look like when it comes to

distribution, transmission and generation. They develop the energy plan, and the minister can—because the minister has the ability in this legislation to have a public process, as far as consultation, and having people come before and say what they have to say, but only if the minister chooses, and only on those items that the minister chooses to put into the review process. There's no independent environmental assessment process where there is an independent body who is looking at the project and reporting back on what that is.

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The IESO and the Ontario Energy Board were set up so that they have some independent processes they have to go through as well. If Hydro One or OPG wanted to do a particular project somewhere in Ontario, the IESO—depending on the part of the project—or the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, would have the ability and the responsibility to do third-party verification of what's going on and to conduct hearings.

What we're essentially doing in this bill is taking that responsibility away from the OEB and the IESO. They are, essentially, now extensions of the minister's office. The minister will say to the OEB or the IESO, "Jump," and the IESO and the OEB are going to say, "How high, Minister? And when do you want me to come down?" The way this bill is written, it takes away the independence of those agencies.

I was opposed to Mike Harris when he originally broke up hydro and put them into five or six different organizations and did what he did, because we always thought at the time that creating five or six organizations costs more money to run than when you have one. It only stands to reason.

At least the Conservatives left in place a certain process within these new agencies that gave the system some transparency. In this case, the minister is in the driver's seat. The minister, first of all, decides if there's going to be any kind of review or type of hearing on whatever the project or the energy plan might be—if and when it's going to happen, how long it's going to happen, and what the terms of reference are going to be when it comes to the actual hearing. At the end, the minister is in total control of what he or she does with the information when it comes back from the consultation process. There's no requirement that the minister has to do anything. It only says that the minister has to take into account what they've consulted on when it comes to the energy plan, if they decide to do the consultation in the first place. So they can decide to have a consultation or not. If they do it, they choose the terms of reference, and that means everything about how those hearings will take place. And when it comes back, the minister doesn't even have to take it into account. It says the minister may take it into account.

So we move from a system where the OEB and the IESO had some requirements that were given by this Legislature in order to make sure that there was at least some amount of transparency and some kind of accountability for the decisions they made, to assist them,

to now, where they're going to, basically, jump to the minister's bark. When the minister barks, they're going to have to jump. It's as simple as that. I don't think the OEB or the IESO would like to have that. I think at the end of the day, they probably would rather have a system that is a bit more independent. I think it's just dangerous to go down this path.

I want to repeat what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said—he said it in jest, but he's darn well serious: These are the guys who designed the energy system that we have now that's in so much trouble, and we're going to trust them with this type of legislation, where they're going to be able to design what the energy plan is based on their own feelings and whatever it is that they want? I think that's a pretty dangerous thing.

Je peux vous dire que le monde d'où je viens—ou M^{me} Gélinas ou autres—se trouve dans la même situation. Ils travaillent fort chaque jour. Ils s'en vont à l'ouvrage; ils reviennent à la fin de la journée; ils essayent de s'assurer qu'un peu reste de leur paye quand ils finissent de payer leurs « bills ». Mais ça devient de plus en plus difficile parce que le prix de l'énergie continue à augmenter. Et quand tu vois quelque chose comme ça, ça veut dire que c'est une possibilité que les décisions prises par le ministre pourraient pousser le prix de l'électricité même plus haut qu'il était avant.

A-t-on vraiment besoin de ça, monsieur le Président, dans un système d'électricité où on paye déjà trop, où les prix sont de deux fois et demie à trois fois plus chers que n'importe où d'autre au Canada où il y a des systèmes publics? Ça coûte même plus cher qu'aux États-Unis où il y a des systèmes privés.

It seems that we're caught in the worst of all worlds when it comes to this government's energy policy. We went from—if not the—one of the lowest energy costs for electricity in North America. I know; I used to have a refinery and a smelter in my riding. It uses a lot of electricity. Xstrata was the largest single utility customer in the province of Ontario with this refinery and smelter. Why did they close down? Electricity prices, pure and simple.

I sat at the meeting we had with Mayor Laughren; the heads of Xstrata; the head of Unifor; Charlie Angus; myself; the Premier then, Mr. McGuinty; and the minister—I can't remember who the minister was. We went through this whole discussion about what to do in order to save Xstrata from closing. Xstrata essentially said, "You've got to give us a break on electricity prices. Without that, we can't stay and operate in Ontario."

What the government has now done with Hydro One privatization is put at risk, again, rates to go up, because rates will go up. Nobody is going to pay a CEO \$4 million a year and expect that it's not going to push the rate up. Nobody is going to privatize 60% of the system and say of the shareholders, "They're just buying this because they want to be good to Ontarians and they want you to have a better deal." I don't think so. They are there because they want to return investment to the shareholders.

Mr. John Vanthof: As they should.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As they should; that's what a business does. A public utility runs at the cost that it costs you to produce and transfers that saving onto the economy—to the employers and to the individuals who need electricity in their homes. That's how hydro and the public system were set up. That's how it is in Quebec, in Manitoba and most of the other provinces in Canada.

But what the government has now done is that they've privatized much on the generation side with a lot of these private power projects. By the way, they're cancelling the feed-in tariff, which I think is really interesting, as the other part of this. What are they going to replace it with? The feed-in tariff was a huge success; it only drove up rates in this province by two and a half times, and now you're going to cancel it and the minister has the right to reinvent whatever he or she wants? Wow, that's a heck of a thing. That's a heck of a power to give to a minister.

Mr. John Vanthof: Like I said, what could go wrong?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What can go wrong? It's only the Liberals. God knows they don't have a track record when it comes to driving energy prices up in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I only had 45 minutes to sit in this House and read about three pages of this bill. I've confirmed they're cancelling the feed-in tariff program; they're eliminating the ability to have the environmental assessment board review an electricity management plan, a new transmission system or whatever it might be. It raises the question: Who is going to benefit in all of this? I don't think it will be the ratepayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's always a pleasure to rise and give response to the member from Timmins-James Bay on his quick reading of the bill. I know if he reads it in more detail he'll come up with much grander or better conclusions in the direction it's taking.

Early in his remarks, he sort of baited our side for the learned scholar to stand up and give remarks. I'm just not going to take that bait. I'll leave it to others to think about whether my remarks are learned or not, but I'm delighted to take a chance on the basis of my preliminary reading of the bill and the direction that we're going.

We've spoken at length about Hydro One, and the question of trust keeps coming up. I have got to tell you, if this bill takes us down the direction anywhere near as good as the Hydro One privatization has gone so far, you should all be bowing with respect. The reality is that we set up a process with an IPO which predicted a certain value for the corporation. The Financial Accountability Officer made his assessment and, looking at the full range of the financing options, he had some concern if the values came in at the low end of the range. But as it turned out, the values of the IPO came out at the high end of the range, we realized immediate sales of all the shares that were put up for option, and, in a glorious way, the very same day they're up 6%.

The people who actually made that investment recognized that there is tremendous value here to move

forward with. Now, when we go out for the next 15%, let's see where those share prices are then. Because, as we suggested might happen, if it shows an even greater value, because we didn't sell it all off at once, we're going to go forward with an even higher share value and get even more money to pay down debt and invest in infrastructure in the province. That's very important.

But what the member will know, if he reads in more detail, is that we are setting in place a long-term energy planning process which probably, had this been done earlier, might have caught some of the problems associated with having gas plants zoned inappropriately for the communities that had grown up around them over the years that they had that opportunity.

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Speaker, I look forward to more debate on this in the House. This is an excellent piece of legislation, and by the time debate is finished, I know they will be on board.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill. It's a noble idea to pursue energy conservation with long-term planning.

I would have thought that long-term planning should have started a long time ago, before they did something like the Green Energy Act, before we got to a point where we had so many scandals and so much wasteful spending that we had to sell 60% of a utility that belongs to the people of Ontario for less than the debt that it was holding. The debt we get to keep, we get 60% of what it's worth, and the other 40% is in that nowhere-land of "Who owns it?"

When we did things like come up with smart meters, smart people tell me their smart bills went up, so those smart meters didn't save us very much money. I think we spent \$2 billion in taxpayers' dollars so we could extract more money out of their pocket, and nothing was conserved.

What we should have done instead of solar and wind power is to go to our neighbours across the river in Quebec—because when I look out my window, I see my good neighbours in the province of Quebec. They have a huge amount of hydroelectricity which they like to sell, because that's good business, selling their natural-resource-driven, water-driven power. They run a power line through the province of Ontario to the New England states to power our American neighbours—our good neighbours who don't happen to want our pipeline, by the way, but maybe we'll have a new president next year and we'll fix that problem. That would be energy conservation as well.

But what we could have done was to buy hydroelectricity from our Quebec neighbours, instead of hundreds of billions of dollars that we're going to spend on green and solar energy over the next 20 years—and sending it to Korea, or France, or offshore. We could have left our money in Quebec and helped our neighbours—left it in Canada—and that would have been conservation of taxpayers' dollars, which is our job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to add my two cents and two minutes' worth to this conversation. I'd like to repeat and echo some of the things that my esteemed colleague from Timmins—James Bay said. We're here today talking about Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

I can't say that I have finished reading this bill. This is the beginning of the debate. I look forward to when our critic is able to give their lead on this, and to really having more understanding, because there are some pieces to this that are questionable. As the member from Timmins—James Bay said, this piece of legislation appears to put blinders on Ontario and on Ontarians.

This is giving a power to the Minister of Energy to draw up a Liberal energy plan. As the question was asked, several times, "What could go wrong?" Speaker, I don't want to know all that could go wrong. I would like to know all that could go right, so I'm interested to hear how the government will defend parts of this bill, and how they will explain it.

To put the minister in the driver's seat entirely, taking into account what comes out of consultation, if and when he or she decides to indeed have consultations, if they want to—you know, I've watched the government, so far in my time here, disregard the consultation process to a large extent, and minimize it at every opportunity, whether at committee or on a bill. We don't travel and we don't consult, so this is just one more way to limit that consultation process, and I think that that's worrying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on Bill 135 with respect to what has been said on this bill to date. In particular, the member from Timmins—James Bay has raised some issues that I think are worth pointing out with respect to the long-term energy planning process.

While the minister and cabinet and the government of the day will have responsibility for moving long-term energy plans forward, they're not doing this in isolation. They're doing this with the consultation process. They're doing this with the views that are taking place and being shared all over Ontario, by Ontarians. This is not some arbitrary planning process without any type of consultation. It is a process that allows greater certainty in Ontario moving forward and is mindful of the changes that we need to make in the sector to help support conservation and to help improve transmission and long-term energy planning. That long-term energy planning will ultimately lead to greater stability in the province of Ontario.

I think that is worthy to be noted and a very important point with respect to this particular piece of legislation. There are a couple of other elements with respect to the legislation that amend the Green Energy Act and that do

help to improve conservation and the reduction of energy costs to consumers as well as to businesses. In particular, large-building energy and water reporting and benchmarking: We know that this is an important process to monitor the use of energy across the province. They're doing this in many other jurisdictions, Speaker.

I look forward to the opportunity to spend a few more minutes highlighting this when we have our party's time to speak about the bill in more detail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that we worry—not just myself but I think a lot of Ontarians—about where this is going to lead us, because the record when it comes to the government and energy policy has been, quite frankly, pretty harmful to most Ontarians. We're paying two and a half times more for electricity now than we did when they came to power. We have all kinds of companies that have closed their doors, in some cases directly because of electricity prices and in other cases partly because of that.

The government says, "Trust us. We're going to give cabinet and we're going to give the minister the responsibility to design, figure out, detail what an energy management plan is going to look like; and essentially take out the public process that we have now in the OEB, the IESO and out of the Environmental Assessment Act. We're going to design our own system. We're going to design how those are going to take place, where they're going to be and what the terms of reference for that will be."

I think there are a lot of people that just—I don't care who the government is but especially this government—don't trust the Liberals to manage our energy sector. I think if it was anybody on the other side—I don't care who the government is—do we really want government having that kind of power where they can determine for themselves what that process is going to be like, as far as the transparency side?

Listen, nobody is arguing that a government has got to develop an energy management plan. God, no; we've been doing that for years. But I think the argument is that there has to be transparency and accountability when it comes to how the process works and what the decisions are going to be and what the terms of reference will be.

What this legislation does is, it takes it away. I'm just saying: Listen, we've seen too much of it. The gas plant debacle, what's happened with the smart meters, what's happened with a whole bunch of other stuff—the feed-in tariff program has been really a problem when it comes to energy prices in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to speak to this bill and participate in this debate on what is a really, really important issue. When I think about a bill like this, and I think about its scope and how it impacts the lives of people in my community and in communities across

Ontario, I think a lot about the broader energy sector and I think about how it touches people. There are a few things that I think about.

First of all I think about how important it is that we manage our sector effectively to make sure we support our economy. I was at an event on Saturday in the community and was talking to a gentleman who runs a business and employs many people. He talked about how important it is that we have affordable, reliable energy supply in our communities to support our businesses in Ontario.

Speaker, by the way, I'd like to mention that I'd like to share my time with the member from Halton and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I neglected to mention that; my apologies.

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Again, this business person was talking about the importance of our energy sector. He was talking about how some of his colleagues had done work in other parts of the world, and how the higher costs they face there and the lack of reliability caused problems for them, an expanding industry in those jurisdictions. As an example, this gentleman highlighted—and we've heard it from our constituents; we've all heard it—how important it is to our economy.

It's also important to our quality of life. I was in a civics class last week, during constituency week, and was talking with young people in a grade 5 class about the three levels of government: what the provincial government does, what the federal government is responsible for and what the municipal government is responsible for. One of the things we inevitably started talking about at the provincial level was energy and how important it is.

It was interesting talking with the students about that, because it wasn't one of the issues they had initially raised. Initially, they talked about things like education, the police and health care. These are, of course, also important priorities for the provincial government. But it was interesting, when we got into energy, that they started to realize how it touched their lives every day: how their iPads were powered by hydro, how so much of what they do every day is dependent on the energy sector. It was interesting to see them develop that appreciation. All that said, obviously a strong, reliable energy sector—affordable energy but also reliable energy—is fundamental to our economy and fundamental to our quality of life.

Speaker, as you may have heard me say before in this House, I come from a business background. One of the things that well-run businesses and well-run organizations do well is that they plan for the future. They look ahead and determine what they, as an organization, want to achieve three, five, 10 years from now. What are their ambitions? I'm not talking about ambitions like being profitable; I'm talking about what markets they want to compete in, where they want to be successful, what sort of risks they face and how they insulate themselves against those kinds of risks. Then, what are the steps they

need to take to make sure they're prepared to seize opportunities and also protect themselves or mitigate those risks?

To me, one of the things my experience in business has taught me is the importance of long-term planning and thoughtful planning, and doing it in a way that is not only rigorous but transparent to the executives in the organization who initially developed the plan, but also transparent to the board and ultimately to the broader shareholders who need to be able to buy into what the executive team has developed as far as their long-term strategic plan.

That brings me to what is in the bill—one of the components in the bill, anyway, that I think is positive, which is the reforms that would be made to long-term energy planning if this bill were passed. Now, long-term energy planning is something this government is already doing very significantly. If I can just check, in 2010 and 2013, the government developed long-term energy plans to guide energy planning and advance energy policy initiatives.

These long-term energy plans are really important. Not unlike the example I gave of the business that plans for the future, long-term energy plans for our province really help ensure that we are appropriately making investments in the right places, whether that is in generation or transmission, which then further reinforces or supports the fact that we've made investments in a cost-effective way, and therefore that rates are kept as low as possible for consumers, but also that we provide stable, reliable energy for people into the future and support the economy and quality of life that I was referring to earlier.

When I think about some of these things, it requires that we think about where our economy is going. What are the demands going to be? What does residential electricity use look like, and what will it be into the future? These are the kinds of things an effective plan would consider, I would think, and this government has been doing that, like I said, in 2010 and 2013.

What this legislation does is really enshrine an effective and transparent process into legislation. Doing this would ensure, like I said, a consistent, transparent, long-term planning process is followed, and it would require that this planning process be done in consultation with stakeholders. Just like the example I gave with the business that consults with its board, its shareholders, its customers or its clients, similarly here, this would require broad consultation on that long-term energy plan to make sure that it is done properly. The members opposite were talking about how important consultation is, and that's exactly what has been baked into this bill and would be baked into the long-term energy planning process.

Speaker, what I'd like to do is just talk a little bit about that in more detail. As I said, in 2010 and 2013, our government developed long-term energy plans, and what these do is set out a comprehensive direction for the energy sector. They were developed through an extensive consultation process, I understand, with consumers, with stakeholders and with aboriginal groups throughout On-

tario. So this bill would enshrine this long-term energy planning process to ensure that it is done transparently and pragmatically and that future long-term energy plans are developed consistently with principles of cost-effectiveness, reliability and clean energy. These are the kinds of things that I think we can all get our heads around and support, because these are strong principles as far as strong financial management of how we support our energy sector, but also ensure, again, like I said from the beginning, that we support our economy, our industry and the quality of life that the people of Ontario rely on.

As a first step in the planning process, the Minister of Energy would request that the IESO develop and submit a technical report setting out the current status of the electricity system, including the adequacy and reliability of current resources. "What's the inventory of what we have today, and is it adequate?" is basically what that means. The report would create a starting point for the development of the long-term energy plan in order to guide the consultation process which would follow. This would be, of course, made available to the public ahead of those consultations.

The Minister of Energy would be authorized to develop long-term energy plans that would set out the government's goals and objectives with respect to specified matters. Again, consistent with our Open Government Initiative, Mr. Speaker, which I'm sure you have heard a lot about and which cuts across ministries in government, when developing a long-term energy plan, a significant amount of consultation would be required with stakeholders, consumers, First Nations communities and Métis communities. The minister would be required to consider that input that he received during the consultation during the long-term energy planning process.

To ensure that the public and stakeholders are able to participate in the consultation process, the proposed legislation would require that consultation include in-person meetings and the opportunity to provide input electronically. So if people want to do it in person, they can, but obviously we live in an electronic age, and that opportunity would be there as well.

I want to leave some time for my fellow caucus members to speak to this bill, because I know they're eager to do that. I think, in summary, what I want to say is that effective management and planning of our electricity system is fundamental to our economy. It's fundamental to our quality of life. We all know that. The business person that I spoke to over the weekend told me that. The children in the grade 5 class that I spoke to talked to me about that. When you have something that's important like that, it's important that you plan. Just like any good business plans, just like the government plans for the future, it's important that we have a plan for our energy sector to make sure the people of Ontario can rely on sustainable energy, reliable energy, clean energy and affordable energy for years to come. That's how we will support a strong economy and that's how we'll continue to support a strong quality of life here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill because it does several things. One of the most important things that it does is to enable our government to plan in the long term. Long-term energy planning is key, and we've heard that so many times from Ontarians out there. What this does is it puts a process in place that is transparent and efficient and enables us to respond to the changing policy and system needs.

This key change is vital, because we need long-term energy planning and we need a process in place to do this. It's key for Ontarians. It simplifies and makes the system predictable and efficient, and increases responses. It allows us to plan for the future, to plan when it comes to things like generation, transmission lines or nuclear energy. We need to be able to know what we're doing in the next few years and to plan for that future.

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In addition, we are coming up with two new initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses and the province conserve energy and water. I can't tell you how important that is. I have young children, and my children are very concerned about the environment. It's important that our government lead the way, not just for our province, but for our country and, actually, worldwide, because this is something that we know we are going to have to be prepared for. We know that our resources are valuable and we know that Canada has some very valuable resources when it comes to water and energy. What this will allow us to do is manage costs and protect our valuable resources.

So, how are we going to do this? Well, what we are going to do is amend the Electricity Act, 1988 and the Ontario Energy Board Act by making sure that we're replacing the current electricity planning process, known as the Integrated Power System Plan process and the long-term energy plan process, to empower the IESO to undertake competitive selection of procurement processes for electricity transmission projects when appropriate.

This is important. Why? Well, when it comes to energy system planning, this will ensure that we are using plans and principles that are consistent with cost-effectiveness, that are reliable, clean energy, engaging the community and engaging our aboriginal community.

When it comes to transmission, we are going to ensure that we are authorizing our plan to undertake competitive processes for transmitter selection and procurement to ensure that ratepayers get the greatest value from new infrastructure investments. It is important that we get plans in place to ensure we are getting the best deals when it comes to procuring the transmission projects and transmission lines that we need.

We are also, as I mentioned earlier, bringing in some green energy assistance. One of our government's key goals is energy conservation. Conservation helps families and businesses save money on their energy bills, reduces

the need to build expensive energy infrastructure and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. This, of course, creates a cleaner future for our children and a cleaner environment.

This legislation, if passed, would introduce two initiatives that are going to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole to conserve energy. The energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings would require property owners to track buildings' energy and water use and greenhouse gas emissions over time to allow owners and renters to determine how a building's energy performance is changing and how it compares to similar buildings.

In addition, the water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances would set water efficiency standards for products that consume both energy and water, like dishwashers and washing machines, allowing Ontarians to make the best choices for themselves when shopping for appliances.

This basically gets down to planning. Our residents in Ontario have told us that they want us to ensure that the prices are kept down. We can do this by making sure that we are planning for the future. We want to make sure that we actually know what we are going to be doing in the next couple of years to get the best prices, to plan in the long term and to ensure that we are doing things in the proper way.

When we came into government, that wasn't quite how things were being done. Transmission lines were not being kept up with. Generators were not being looked after; our generating stations were not being looked after. We had to pour a lot of money into this system. That's what drove our costs up. Now we're making sure that we're not in that situation again by planning for the future.

Thank you so much for having me speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to participate in the debate on Bill 135 with my colleagues the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Halton. This is an important piece of legislation, and I think it reinforces the importance of great planning and solid planning, moving forward, in the energy system.

We all know that this is a system that has significant challenges. We all know that all governments have faced significant challenges in the energy sector and in dealing with all elements of energy, whether it's generation, transmission, distribution or conservation. All of the issues related to the sector have had huge challenges over the years, and our government is committed to getting this right, to working to ensure that we have a long-term energy plan that makes sense for Ontarians.

We talk about energy generation and the importance of that. Certainly in my own riding and the area around Sault Ste. Marie, we have seen very significant projects come to life to help support energy capacity in Ontario. I think of the Brookfield energy wind farm, a 189-megawatt project, and the Starwood Energy solar farm, with 60 megawatts.

I think of some of the other initiatives that we've moved forward to support industry with cogeneration and helping our major employer in our community reduce their energy need by about half. The steel mill in my riding uses about 140 megs of power, and they now have a cogeneration facility that is nearly 70 megawatts, reducing their emissions, reducing their costs significantly and making them more competitive globally. That's a huge benefit to both the environment and to reducing generation capacity.

We also have in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie the only solar panel manufacturer in northern Ontario, Heliene solar. There are about 70 jobs at this plant. They export this type of equipment all over the world. It's about getting to these technological resources that we can help support other countries with, passing on our technology and helping to strengthen the economy here in Ontario.

Importantly, other elements that have been mentioned during this afternoon's discussion—things like smart meters have come up. We can talk about continuing to spend billions of dollars to build new generation in Ontario, or we can have people shift their usage of their energy to reduce peak periods where we're using that energy. We're either going to shift energy use and consumption from peak, so that we can reduce our costs, or we're not going to do that and we're going to say to Ontarians, "Look, it's going to cost you billions of dollars to build more generation and more capacity."

On this side of the House, we believe—and I think most of our colleagues across the way would say—that saving and conserving energy, and shifting some of that use to keep it off peak periods, would help in our long-term energy plan, and would help to reduce the cost to Ontarians of having to continue to build more very, very expensive generation capacity.

I think it's certainly worthy of note that in the proposed legislation, the commitment around—I've heard members from the opposition talk about the arbitrary nature of the minister, the cabinet and the government potentially determining the long-term energy plan, but that's not the case. The fact of the matter is that this legislation would ensure consistent, transparent long-term energy planning that would enshrine in law extensive consultation with stakeholders and aboriginal groups in the development of long-term energy planning.

This is an important element in terms of how these plans will be put together. They shouldn't be put together in isolation, or in a vacuum, so to speak. They should be plans that are well thought out, where we work with all Ontarians to ensure they reflect the views and values of all Ontarians. That way we will get the best possible plan to be able to move forward.

I think it's also important that there are a number of other initiatives that are key parts of this legislation: the energy and water reporting and benchmarking, which we know will help to reduce costs, save consumers money and be more effective; as well as the water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances, another important element to this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to get up and rise for a couple of minutes to talk about government Bill 135.

Again, we continue to see a government with no economic plan for jobs here in Ontario. In fact, I don't think there's any significant legislation currently on the books in Ontario to encourage private sector job creation in Ontario.

We're talking today about Ontario's electricity system. I heard the MPP for Halton talking about her children and how she fears for their future. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I fear for the future generations in this province when it comes to jobs. Will there be jobs in Ontario, well-paying jobs, with the government's current long-term energy plan? We know, according to their own documents, that over the next three years, energy bills are going to go up by almost 50%. By 2018, businesses, homeowners—those bills are going up, I think, about 42%. We already have the highest energy rates in all of North America, and their plan is to increase the cost.

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Life is already unaffordable in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. I don't have to remind any government members about the loss of manufacturing jobs that we've seen under their watch. Over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have vanished from the province. This government's plan is to drive more jobs out of Ontario. I think what we need in Ontario is an economic plan to create jobs. They're bringing forward all these bills that continue to drive jobs out of Ontario, and I think that's bad for the future generations who are being raised in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House. My first comments on Bill 135—I'm hoping to expand on them later in the afternoon, but we haven't had much time to ingest this bill.

I would like to respond specifically to the member from Etobicoke Centre and his remarks on this bill. He was talking about his experience in business, and I appreciate that. In my experience in business, hydro has basically doubled—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Two and a half.

Mr. John Vanthof: Two-and-a-half times. It's projected to go up another 50% in the next little while, and those are costs that business can't control. So for the government to say, "Well, we're looking at long-term planning so that we know where we're going in the future," obviously they haven't really taken that part into account. With hydro rates skyrocketing, the people who actually create jobs in the province can't budget for that, and they're taking a couple of courses of action: (a) they're leaving the province, as Xstrata Copper did; or (b) they're just plain ceasing operations. That's a huge, huge issue in this province.

This bill, quite frankly—in the short time we've had to look at it—doesn't address those issues. They're talking

about the planning process, but we've got planning processes. We've got the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO that are actually involved in the planning process. What this bill does, in the fine print, is it takes the power away from them. It takes the power away from the people so the minister can actually direct the OEB on how it's supposed to work.

The Premier has said several times that we're going to be protected from higher hydro rates because of the OEB, yet this bill strips the power from the OEB. You can't have it both ways.

Hon. David Orazietti: Who's accountable to whom?

Mr. John Vanthof: In this bill, the OEB is accountable to the minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Just a couple of minutes: I'll be speaking later at more length on Bill 135, but I'm happy to have a couple of minutes now in response to the comments from our members who have explained that the bill, primarily, as well as other things, will deal with a new planning process, a long-term energy planning process in the province of Ontario. I think we're all aware of the importance of that.

In my local context—I only have, as I said, a couple of minutes—I can talk about how long-term planning is important to northwestern Ontario and my community of Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

People will remember that back in 2003, all three political parties committed to closing coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. There were five coal-fired generating facilities in the province that generated about 5,000 megawatts or 6,000 megawatts of energy. About 20% of the total provincial output was generated from coal. Out of the five plants, two of them were in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. What I want to underline here is that in terms of long-term energy planning, I don't believe anybody was talking about how we were going to replace those 5,000 megawatts or 6,000 megawatts of energy, even though all three parties had committed to removing coal from the generation mix.

When it came to security of energy supply, given the constrictions on the east-west tie line, the loss of those two coal-fired plants in Thunder Bay and in Atikokan and for all of northwestern Ontario potentially could have had significant consequences. Our government stepped up to the plate. We spent somewhere in the order of magnitude of \$200 million to convert the plant in Thunder Bay and the plant in Atikokan, to not only keep those jobs in those communities and that tax base in the community, but as part of a long-term energy planning mix ensuring that the long-term energy security needs of northwestern Ontario can be met.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to add some comments on Bill 135, an energy bill, and respond to the comments from the members from Etobicoke Centre and Halton and the Minister of Government Services.

The member for Etobicoke Centre was talking about the need for affordable, reliable electricity. Well, under this Liberal government, all we've seen in their long-term planning is planning for further and further and further increases in the cost of electricity. Just recently, on November 1, we had another 8% increase in peak rates in the price of electricity.

I can say that in Parry Sound—Muskoka, affordability of electricity is the number one issue affecting people across the riding. In Parry Sound—Muskoka, the provincial incomes are below average. Generally speaking, those on the lower end of the income scale tend to have electric baseboard heat. I'm getting calls, on a daily basis, from people who are being threatened with their hydro being cut off, who just can't afford to pay for the electricity costs in the province of Ontario.

They've talked about the smart meter program. Well, the Auditor General did the report last year showing that it was supposed to cost \$1 billion but it actually cost \$2 billion. Also, in that report, she goes on to talk about how the policies of this government resulted in huge amounts of global adjustment: some \$7 billion a year that we're paying, through electricity rates, to cover above-market prices for all the policies—the green energy policies being a big part of it, wind and solar—that this government has come up with, driving up the cost of electricity.

That is the number one issue in my riding: People can't afford to pay their electricity—not to mention the effect it has on jobs in the area and the ability of businesses to compete.

If I get a chance later, I'll highlight some of the experiences that entrepreneurs in Parry Sound—Muskoka have had with high electricity costs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the opportunity we have for questions and comments on this round. One of the government members has a chance to respond.

I look to the Minister of Government Services to respond on behalf of the government.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the members from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Thunder Bay—Atikokan and Parry Sound—Muskoka for their comments on the debate on Bill 135.

I think there are a number of important priorities in this legislation that will help to strengthen the way in which we deliver energy in the province of Ontario. I think that's one of the most important, fundamental changes of the legislation.

The other aspect is that we need to continue to embrace alternatives; to move to alternative sources of energy and ensure that we are moving toward programs and policies that help to support conservation. Conservation is fundamental. Of course, there will continue to be growing demand for energy, but things like shifting from peak through the use of smart meters—although there are concerns around them to some extent, the reality is, those concerns pale in comparison to the costs that Ontarians would bear to build new, very, very expensive generation capacity in the province of Ontario.

The other aspect that I think is very important to note is with respect to the accountability and the oversight in regard to energy planning. When we talk about the OEB and the IESO, who are they accountable to? We're talking about making the long-term energy plan part of the minister's responsibilities—cabinet and the government—and enshrining in legislation the requirement for extensive consultation with the public, with stakeholders, with aboriginal groups in the development of these plans. That, to me, is responsible. Allowing individual energy organizations to develop plans and to not necessarily be accountable to anyone is not the way we believe the long-term energy plans should be structured and not the way we should be going.

Speaker, I encourage all members of the Legislature to support Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

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Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

The Liberal government, on the opposite side, says that it wants to legislate more efficiencies and more conservation measures, but the details in Bill 135 point to a different trend. Mainly, they point to two new trends: One is that they're setting up Ontarians for forced home energy audits and new consumption taxes; the second is to centralize all transmission and electricity sector planning with the energy minister's political staff, which means overruling industry experts at the IESO and OEB. In other words, Bill 135 will allow government to drive energy policy in a direction that's best for their party, not for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I think you'll recall that we used to have here in Ontario the lowest rates in North America, and under this 12-year reign of terror with these Liberals, we now have the highest rates across North America. Just recently, one of my colleagues—I believe from Parry Sound-Muskoka—advised that an 8% increase was on your bill as of November 1. That is not the direction we want to be going.

It's the same attitude we saw back in 2009 when the Liberal Party ushered in wind turbine policies that saddled us with billions and billions of dollars in contracts. The point is, no one can object to any project rolled out by the Liberal government, even if it's unaffordable, even if it's unnecessary, meaning this government is giving itself the legal ability to saddle all of us with the full cost of any future energy contracts without any repercussions. Just think of the recent fire sale of Hydro One.

Another example: They quietly ushered in wind turbines without any cost-benefit analysis, without any consultations and without any consideration of the impact on ratepayers. I have to share in this House again that I continually hear that from my people back in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, particularly the municipal representatives, who have had no ability to have any say in this legislation. They are the people

closest to it, they're the people who hear the most about it, and yet they have virtually not even the ability to comment on it. They can comment, but there's really no impact that they can change anything.

The Green Energy Act is the epitome of this government's wishful thinking and dashed hopes, and, most importantly, proof that sensible energy policies cannot be developed by the energy minister's office alone. I'm going to talk a little bit more about the Green Energy Act, because it certainly, in my four years, has been one of the key things that we've all talked about, one of the things that I hear the most about continually. And it's not just the Green Energy Act; it's the impact of that Green Energy Act decision on the needs and realities of everyday Ontarians.

After the Liberals rolled out their Green Energy Act in 2009, they quickly came to learn that their plan was holding Ontarians hostage to the most unaffordable plan ever implemented in this province. The unaffordable subsidies to the wind and solar companies and the so-called global adjustment were zapping ratepayers with unprecedentedly high rates.

Chapman's Ice Cream in Markdale was getting zapped with a global adjustment of \$1 million. That's hard to even fathom. I remember our then energy critic, Vic Fedeli, came up and we had a round table not only with the Chapmans but in their facility with a number of business people from the Markdale community and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound proper. It was very interesting to have that frank discussion, particularly with a big company like Chapman's. They have a 160,000-square-foot warehouse on Highway 10, which many people, if they've been up the highway, will know, and that's totally on the energy grid. You could just see the wheels turning, of: "How is this going to impact me? Where is this going to go down the road? How are we going to sustain and stay profitable and viable?" They provide 600-plus jobs in a relatively small, rural community.

The one thing that really came out of there is that this global adjustment is something that the government has used to basically just pull money from the taxpayer to pay these subsidies, and to pay, by the way—it's a misnomer that I continually hear out in our communities about giving money, giving power to the States and to Quebec. We don't actually give it away; we pay for it. I'm going to talk a little bit here shortly about just how much. We don't give it away; we actually pay other areas, other states and other provinces to take our surplus power, and yet this Liberal government wants to add more and more to the grid. It makes no sense, no matter which way you want to spin it.

That's just one example of the damaging impact the global adjustment charge is having on the energy bills of small and medium-sized businesses in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I hear it from M&M Meat Shops. I hear it from the grocery stores. I hear it from the manufacturing community. I hear it from just about any business out there that has a significant role that's needed for their industry to be driven forward in energy. How

can they continually hear that there's going to be another almost 50% increase over the next four years and accept that that is just going to be status quo and we're going to have to absorb it? Most of those products and services that they're making and manufacturing cannot sustain that type of an increase and stay viable going forward.

Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk determined in her report that the global adjustment will have cost Ontarians \$50 billion by the end of this year. That's with a B, Mr. Speaker. That's not million; that's \$50 billion.

Mr. Todd Smith: That's a B for Bonnie and a B for billion.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's B for billion; you are correct. That's the cost to you, the taxpayers of Ontario, by the end of 2015. That's largely as a result of the changes made by the passing of the Green Energy Act in 2009. As I say, that wasn't just passed; they steamrolled that. There was no consultation. There was no input by any of our communities. There was no input by any of our leaders other than this government saying, "We're going down this road and you're going to like it." Only the Liberal Party believes its Green Energy Act has lowered the cost of electricity.

I'm going to talk a little bit about rate increases. As I said earlier, we've just faced another hydro rate increase on November 1 of 8%. I'm not certain anyone's wages out there went up by 8% on November 1, but they certainly know that their hydro rates went up again. This is a continued effect. As I've already said earlier, it's going to go up another 50% over the next four years.

This is a government, this Liberal government that we sit opposed to every day, that has brought in the largest hydro increases in Ontario's history. Similarly, another record they set is doubling the debt—the most debt of our province in our Confederation's history by this Liberal government—and they continue to add deficit each budget that I've been here—

Mr. Todd Smith: First government ever.

Mr. Bill Walker: First government ever. Every budget I've had, they've increased the deficit, the debt on our children—those new pages that just joined us today. It's partly why I'm here, standing: for the next generation and the generation to follow them, and to make it so that it can actually be affordable, so that they can actually enjoy the quality of life that those who came before me enjoyed and that I'm enjoying. But it's very, very daunting, when I see the debt that this government is running us into and continuing to add policy that's driving the cost up and driving our debt up.

We spend \$11 billion a year on interest payments, our third-largest expenditure in government—health care, education and \$11 billion just to service our debt. Just think, Mr. Speaker, what we could do in your riding and in my riding if we had \$11 billion sitting here that we could actually utilize for programs to help those less fortunate, to help our hospitals, to help our schools, affordable housing, community and social services and mental health—all of the myriad of challenges that people come through every one of our 107 doors every

day of the week asking for help with. And we're spending \$11 billion on interest payments, and that's only going up. It's increasing.

I often receive copies of bills from constituents in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, as I'm sure my colleague my seatmate here from Prince Edward county—

Mr. Todd Smith: A good seatmate.

Mr. Bill Walker: A great seatmate. I must confess he's not a bad guy, and he's doing a heck of a job on Hydro One. He's trying to, again, stop the government from making this wrong-headed decision that we're going to pay for forever and ever.

I think, again, the Financial Accountability Officer came out a couple of weeks ago, just before we took our constituency week break, and he said, "Basically, you're going to get a couple of years. It's going to look like a good result because you're going to get some quick profit, quick revenues, but then it's going to decrease and decrease and decrease forever and ever and a day."

How do we replace that \$700-million revenue source?
Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Some of the Liberals over there can heckle and comment all they want, but they are the ones that have to look in the eyes of the people and tell them, "I made that decision, and I was proud to make it." They're going to take an asset that's producing \$700 million a year and they're going to get rid of that. Where do you think that \$700 million is coming from? I'm guessing, with a Liberal government that has never found a tax they don't like, that somewhere we're going to have more taxes coming at us.

My constituents are telling me they're shocked and appalled by the charges they see on their monthly bills. They come in and can't believe how high their bills are and how much they've increased over the last number of years.

I have a young lady—she has actually gone to Manitoba for a couple of years to do part of her doctorate studies. She actually sent her dad a note with what her hydro bill was in Manitoba as opposed to what it is here. Again, you want to hear outrage and you want to hear shock. This is a young family that are starting out.

Now, what are the chances of her coming back here if that continues? If she keeps looking at those—these are not items that they can just wilfully say, "I don't want to pay these." Energy is one of those consumer-driven needs that we all face. She's looking at that and going, "Here it is."

Now the government is forcing many of our doctors, through the approach they're taking with negotiations now—many of our doctors are saying, "If I'd have known this was coming, I would have gone to another province already." It just compounds the challenges, particularly when we talk about things like hydro and where we're going and where the picture is not painted very well that it's getting better; it's going to get worse.

Constituents have no qualms telling me that the Liberal government is forcing them to choose between heating their home and feeding their family. That may

sound like it's just a rhetorical comment, but I truly do—most of us have people coming through our doors every day, saying, "Do I pay my rent or do I pay my hydro bill?"

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Particularly in our climate—it's a beautiful day out there today, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad of it. I hope it continues for a while. But we know that in December, in January, in February—I might say that the 60th anniversary of the Wiarton Willie Festival is this year on February 2. I hope that everyone tunes into that. Without a shadow of a doubt, it will be a great festival. But we'll also, without a shadow of a doubt, have some cold weather around that time, and we definitely will need those hydro meters going at that time.

It is truly something a lot of people are grappling with. That's who we're here to represent. We're here to represent everyone, but particularly those who are less fortunate and don't have the ability to really take in these 40% and 50% increases—an 8% increase just in the last couple of days.

Shame on this government for purporting statements like, "We are lowering the cost of electricity and making it affordable for families." Well, I can tell you, I have not had one person come through my constituency door or at all of the functions that I attend—and I attend over 300 functions in a year, just in my riding—say to me, "This government is doing a great job of lowering my hydro bill. Can you give them a high-five when you get back to Parliament on Monday morning?" I trust, if they're honest, that none of them over there can say that they've had anybody come in and give them a high-five for the lower hydro bills that they have. Even some of the bar owners, I think, in town would struggle with where their energy rates are going.

It's a word that comes to mind: Liberal hypocrisy. This is why I was so disappointed in the opening remarks on Bill 135 by the energy minister and by his parliamentary assistant. In his opening remarks, the energy minister said that this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think I have to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

Interjection: You shouldn't have said "bar." Don't say "bar."

Mr. Bill Walker: No bars; I take the bars back. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. That must have inadvertently happened. I apologize.

In his opening remarks, the energy minister said that this bill would "enshrine in legislation Ontario's Open Government Initiative by making consultation with the public ... a requirement in the development of our future long-term energy plans." How many times have we heard the promise to "consult and listen" and then watch this Liberal government shrug it off and basically say, "Thanks very much. We have the majority. That's where we're going." It's not what Ontarians want, it's not what they expect and it's certainly not what they deserve.

The minister certainly does not have a monopoly on this insincerity. His parliamentary assistant and MPP for Mississauga—Streetsville said in his opening remarks on Bill 135, "The Green Energy Act... has helped Ontario contain costs and more efficiently manage energy supply and demand."

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I heard a little chuckle, and that is indicative of what I hear across this province, no matter where I go. In fact, when I'm out at a lot of events—I don't just go, of course, to Conservative or Conservative-minded events; I go where the public is. People of all political stripes come up and they would chuckle, just like my esteemed colleague and seatmate from Prince Edward county just did. You cannot say, in true conscience, that they have actually contained costs and more efficiently managed energy supply and demand, if you are a Liberal on that side of the House.

To put this all into context: This is the same member who was part of the gas plant problem, a gas plant his government needed to run as backup when the wind couldn't turn all those turbines; a scandal that cost Ontario ratepayers over \$1.1 billion—again with a B, Mr. Speaker—and it didn't produce one kilowatt of power. What did Ontarians get for that? Zero.

Mr. Todd Smith: A bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: A bill, and not a good bill.

He also said in his remarks that we're generating power economically. The truth of the matter is that this government actually calls down to Niagara Falls and says, "Don't capture all the water today. We have too much other energy on the grid, so don't capture." That is the cleanest, greenest, freest form of power we have. Even the environmental community should be totally abhorrent with this government, because we're firing up things like gas plants when we don't have the wind and sunshine to do the back up. It absolutely baffles me when I have this discussion with people across this great province—we actually get down to telling them the facts and letting them know truly what's happening out there, how much it is costing and why their power rates are going through the roof.

I want the minister and parliamentary assistant to open to page 94 of the Auditor General's report and read the numbers chart. If they still think it's economical to keep paying others billions of dollars to take our surplus energy off our system, then I give up, Mr. Speaker. Well, I won't give up. I'll continue to push; I'll continue to fight. But, you know, a figure of speech is that it's very challenging when someone knows the facts. They realize. They have to know this. I trust that many of their Liberal constituents who vote for them know the same facts, and I can't fathom why they're not pushing them, saying, "You've got to give this a second thought."

I'm going to close, in my last four or five minutes, by talking a little bit about something that, sadly, we have talked about in my whole four years here. Every time I think we are past the last one—it can't get worse—there is yet another scandal from this government. I'm not

alone when I say that I get nervous every time the government starts to talk energy policy and legislation. Just in my four years here, I've seen what decimation has been done.

When you look over the last 12 years of, as I say, their reign of terror, it has truly demoralized our business community. Certainly our energy sector is in a terrible mess. After all this, this is the same government that cancelled two gas plants, to the tune of—get it again—another \$1 billion, in order to win an election, and said it will cost taxpayers—I'm quoting the energy minister of the day—"a cup of coffee" to recoup the losses.

This is the same government that wasted \$2 billion on what everyone has come to know as dumb meters—they weren't smart. Most of the people I have talked to who had them installed—the word "smart" does not come to mind in most conversations when I'm having that discussion. It's the same government that created major issues with billing and metering in rural areas. My constituency office alone took hundreds of calls and received hundreds of emails and letters from people who were being chased for thousands of dollars for energy they never owed to Hydro One.

The minister will know this, as I went to him for answers and he did not know what to do. But he was quick to sell Hydro One without any consultation. It was a sale opposed by 185 municipalities, chambers of commerce, and small, medium and large business; yet another energy deal that will put us further in debt in the long run, as I alluded to earlier.

The Hydro One sale, Mr. Speaker: We've spent a lot of time, but I'm going to recap very quickly. Hydro One is a valuable asset that they have put up for fire sale, an asset that members of that party and their former leader and Premier said was the wrong thing to do. The Financial Accountability Officer, releasing his report on the financial impact of the partial sale of Hydro One, said it's a bad deal in the long term for the people of Ontario.

The Wynne Liberals have recklessly proceeded with the fire sale of Hydro One despite opposition, as I said, from 185 municipalities and nearly 80% of Ontarians. Don't we think, in a democracy, that 80% against something would be a majority, and you would actually stop and say, "You know what? We are actually going to at least give this sober second thought. We're going to slow down the process. We're going to go out, do some consultation and truly listen to the people we are all given the privilege to serve"?

They have done so despite the Financial Accountability Officer's recent report confirming what he's been saying all along—again, as I said earlier—that it's a bad deal for Ontarians. The Financial Accountability Officer projects that as a result of the fire sale, the province's fiscal situation would be worse than if they didn't sell Hydro One, mostly because of the revenue that Hydro One currently brings into the provincial coffers.

The fire sale could cost the province approximately \$700 million in revenue every year, and the net profit from the sale could be as low as \$1.4 billion for infra-

structure funding. I think someone else in the House has even said we could probably borrow that money at today's interest rates and be ahead without giving up that asset that is a perpetual source of revenue for us, Mr. Speaker.

The report also predicts that the Hydro One fire sale will impact ratepayers. Coupled with the OEB's recent announcement that hydro rates increased on November 1 by 8%, average Ontario families will continue to struggle to pay their hydro bills.

Now that there's no turning back from a bad deal, will the Liberals tell the truth about why they are selling Hydro One? Will they at least hold off and not sell the remaining shares? The public does not support this fire sale. We all know that. We are asking them to do it. They are trying to cover this thing up and come out with a budget and say, "Look how well we have done with our revenue." Short-term gain for long-term pain is the message I have heard from many of my elders who are trying to implant with us the wisdom of how to govern for the long term and what is best in the long term of Ontarians.

For that side of the House to talk about Bill 135 as a bill to legislate consultation on future energy policy is truly disingenuous. I guess my only question left to them is: What is section 7 all about? Are you seriously going to force home energy audits on people now? It certainly reads like Ontarians are about to be forced into home energy audits and new taxes on conservation and consumption. It sounds like another scandal brewing. Mr. Speaker, we need baseload power. I'm one who always stands, as our caucus nuclear committee chair, saying, "There is baseload power." We need to be doing that. We need to be making sure that that is an essential part of our mix going forward, and that we make the commitment, not doing some of the ideas of selling off some of our other power sources now just to make their financial situation look good.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly have some challenges here with Bill 135, and we want to make sure that it's open and transparent to all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

1510

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure and an honour to stand in this House, and today to comment on the member from—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. John Vanthof: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I won't say what I usually call the member, but I did follow closely his remarks, and I can concur with a lot of them. Specifically, I'd like to give a shout-out to Chapman's ice cream, some of the best product in the province—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Kapuskasing cheese; it's very good.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. Thornloe Cheese.

I'm sure they face huge problems with hydro, as does Thornloe Cheese, as do a lot of further processing

facilities in this province. The government says, "We want to increase agricultural jobs in the agri-sector by 120,000." That's pretty tough in further processing, when you're paying—in our case, we have Thornloe Cheese, 20 minutes from the Quebec border; compared to an equivalent cheese plant on the other side, their costs are double. Their hydro costs are double.

This government has been in power for 12 years, and now with this bill they're talking about long-term planning. They've done some long-term planning previously, but obviously that didn't work that well.

The member talked about smart meters, and I've heard a few others here talk about smart meters and how they're helping control the amount of electricity we use. In rural Ontario they've been a huge disaster, because it doesn't matter what time you use electricity; the delivery charges are always way more than what the actual price of the power is.

Like the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, our office has handled hundreds of cases where the smart meters didn't work, where the bills didn't make sense. Together with the Ombudsman, who can no longer look at these issues, we helped solve them and keep a lot of people in their houses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Speaker, as you can appreciate, there are a great deal of moving parts to Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, with regard to system planning, transmission, large building energy, water efficiency etc.

I would just perhaps say, though, as I'm reminded by one of our energy staff members, Katrina, who is strategically located over there, that the ice storm that plagued this city and this country in, I believe it was, December 2013 was the type of once-in-a-century event which I think truly calls upon the government of Ontario as stewards of the energy system of this province to do its very best—weather, of course, is a federal responsibility—but at least, here on the ground, to mitigate as best we can eventualities like that.

We seem to have, for example, excessively hot summers, and perhaps now—not to tempt fate or anything—excessively aggressive winters. We talked, for example, about the gas plant cancellations. One wonders, of course: Had those gas plants been around, perhaps the city of Toronto might have recovered from that ice storm a little bit quicker than it did.

I remember, for example, right in Etobicoke North, being one of the older communities and situated close to some of the branch lines of transmission, the 401 etc., that there were many, many residents who first of all had no power for days on end. I myself, by the way, had to leave my own home at about 3.5 days into the ice storm, with a newborn baby.

Today's weather—which I'm not reading from a digital device, Speaker—is 10 degrees Celsius with 0% precipitation, but as has been rightly cited, we live in a cold, aggressive climate, and this kind of system-wide integration is absolutely necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to first of all thank my seatmate, the honourable member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, for his comments on a very destructive bill, Bill 135. It's going to do more damage, if you can believe it, to the province's energy sector, which is already the mess of North America. There's no question about it.

As I toured last week in my constituency, I went to places like Chapman's ice cream. I didn't go to Chapman's ice cream, but I went to Ivanhoe Cheese in my riding. I actually went to a public meeting up in Bancroft. I went to the Red Steer butcher shop. I had another public meeting in Brockville. I had a meeting with the chamber of commerce in Belleville. What we talked about the entire meeting, every time we stopped to talk, was the rising cost of electricity and the damage it was doing, not just to our residential customers like Grandma and Grandpa Smith up in Bancroft, but to the businesses that are here employing people in province of Ontario. They simply can't compete in Ontario any longer, as the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound indicated. It's all because of the mess that this Liberal government has made with its energy policy, and now with this bill, Bill 135, they're actually forcing more of the same on us. They are doubling down in this bill on the mistakes they have made.

Good God, the Minister of Energy has done enough to make us uncompetitive in Ontario. Now they want to remove the Ontario Energy Board and they want to remove the IESO from the process and centralize power in the minister's office. When are these guys going to realize that they have made a mess of Ontario? We had the lowest electricity prices in all of North America just a few short years ago, and because of the decisions that they've made in the Minister of Energy's office—or the Premier's office, or whoever is making the decisions over there—we are an uncompetitive place to do business. We need a wake-up call with our Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to add my voice to this conversation and make comments to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound on his thoughts on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning. I've already had one opportunity today to weigh in on this conversation, but I'm going to bring up some of the points that the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound made.

I started really paying attention there at the end when he was bringing up sober second thought. This should be a room where we focus on that sober second thought and debating, hearing from all sides, weighing an issue appropriately. Time and time again, Mr. Speaker, that isn't what we see, especially when it's around electricity, especially when it is surrounding Hydro One.

As the member mentioned, there are 185 municipalities, my own included, that have come out and said,

"Stop the sell-off of Hydro One." This is a government that says, "Nope, we're not listening." Those municipalities and Ontarians across the province are not part of this conversation. "Why are they really selling Hydro One?" was a question that he asked. That's a great question. Who really is going to benefit?

We talked about smart meters. In fact, I think the member called them "dumb meters." It would be interesting, if they actually were dumb meters, what they would measure. Then they might work, if they were actually measuring poor choices.

I'm almost out of time.

Another comment that the member made was that we want this to be an open and transparent process for all Ontarians. I would also say that we don't just want open and transparent; we want "warm" and we want "well lit."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions-and-comments time. I return to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane for bringing up my Chapman's. I'm going to return the favour: His Thorncloe Cheese, I am sure, is in a very similar situation where the costs are really becoming prohibitive for them to continue to move forward, to make decisions on where they want to expand their business and do even more, because right across the border they can get their power, which we pay them, by the way, again, to take—we don't give it; we pay them to take it—making them doubly competitive.

He makes a good point as well about the Ombudsman. I just ran out of time and couldn't get into that. This government took the ability away from the Ombudsman to actually scrutinize and make sure that they were accountable. It's hard to believe.

The member from Etobicoke North made the comment and used the slogan "moving parts." I dare say, Mr. Speaker, if this government keeps going, in our manufacturing sector there won't be any parts left to move, because most of the businesses are, sadly, leaving Ontario. Certainly people aren't banging on the door to come here like they used to when we had the lowest rates in North America.

He talked about the ice storm. What I want to just suggest there is that baseload power from our nuclear certainly made sure that we had that power when we needed it. So I want to make sure this government is equally putting time and energy into the nuclear file as they are in some of these other challenges that they're doing.

My colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings and my seatmate, who is a great guy, talked about the damage to this sector. He travelled his riding, as he does every week, making sure he's out listening and hearing. I can almost guarantee that he got no high-fives from any of the constituents out there for this government lowering the cost of electricity, efficiently managing the energy supply and demand. I can almost guarantee that he did not get any of those.

1520

The member from Oshawa: Thank you very much. You raise some good points there as well, and I'm going to reiterate them: Who is really going to benefit from the selling of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker? And why are the Liberals really selling this? It's not for the long-term benefit of Ontarians. They can say that all they want. We can read through—80% of Ontarians are opposed. We really wish they would have a sober second thought before they go on any further than the 15% of this great asset they've already sold.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you for this opportunity to add a few thoughts to Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning. Basically, the bill does a number of things to a number of different acts. The first one, and the one that has been talked about the most, but I think it's because it is that important, has to do with long-term energy planning. We all know that energy is not something where you get up one morning and decide, "Oh, we need a new transmission line here or we need more generation capacity here or we need a new nuclear refurbishment at billions of dollars." This is something that needs to be planned, and you need a long-term plan.

Ontario has a long-term energy plan, as we speak, but this plan was done in a way completely different from the way it will be done in the future, if this bill goes through. The bill would amend the Electricity Act to give the Minister of Energy—the minister himself or herself—rather than the Independent Electricity System Operator, better known as IESO—the Independent Electricity System Operator, right now, has the responsibility for the long-term planning of our electricity system. No more; it would be given to the minister, this person, whoever he or she is. The responsibility for developing a long-term energy plan would still have to be done at specific intervals and within regulations, but not by IESO anymore. The role of IESO would be to develop technical reports to inform the plan, but only when requested by the minister.

This is important because if you don't want to know something, all you have to do is not ask. But sometimes even the information you don't want to know about should be taken into account, to make sure we do a good job for the people we represent, for the people of Ontario.

There would be an obligation for the minister to consult with First Nations, consult with consumers, distributors, generators and transmitters, but there is no requirement that the long-term energy plan be reviewed by the OEB. This is reviewed now by the Ontario Energy Board; that is a safeguard that we have now. Right now, an independent third-party agency looks at the plan to see how we best meet the people of Ontario who—all of us need electricity, but how do we do this in a way that serves Ontarians? They're going to be out of the picture. The minister will have this responsibility now to make

sure we get this right, because we're all talking—billions of dollars hang in the balance here. We have the OEB, who gets to oversee that plan—no more. Before, the long-term energy plan needed to be reviewed by the OEB, making sure that we did integration in the power system plan and all of this. All those requirements are done. We are now focusing on something that is very important, that is very costly, that has huge implications for each and every one of us because we all use electricity—we are now concentrating all that power on the shoulders of one individual, the minister. I don't know why we would that.

As it is, the way we have, the system to put our long-term energy plan right now—there are, I would say, shortcomings with that plan as it is, although they had all of this opportunity. Now all of this will be in the hands of one person, on the shoulders of the minister, and I think this is wrong. I think this is going in the wrong direction.

I think that when information will only be given when asked for, this is the wrong way to go. If you know something that could have an impact on the energy plan and the energy system in this province, you shouldn't be limited to giving your advice when the ministry asks you; you should be free to give advice to the minister because you know something that's going on. There are hundreds of very knowledgeable people who work at the IESO who can give that feedback, and one person could not possibly, feasibly be able to know it all. This is going backwards.

The second part of the bill—I already told you there are many parts to the bill—is the role of the IESO and the OEB in relation to the long-term energy plan. Here again, we're looking at an amendment to the Electricity Act to give the minister—not only is he going to be in charge of the plan, but he or she will have the power to issue directives to the IESO and the OEB respecting the implementation of the long-term energy plan and requiring the IESO and the OEB to submit implementation plans for approval.

We're turning this completely on its head. Where we had seen that it serves the people of Ontario well to distance ourselves from the political process and put it in the hands of technical experts to put together a long-term energy plan for the people of Ontario, we have now decided that the system that will serve us better will be to have it all in the hands of a politician—on the shoulders of a politician—who not only will only give the experts the way to express themselves when he or she asks, but will also direct them.

All of this concentration of power on the shoulders of one individual for a file that big makes no sense. There have already been really significant planning mistakes that have been done in this province that have cost us dearly. In this House, everybody will remember the gas plants that were supposed to go into Oakville and Mississauga. Well, you can drive by those and see the millions of dollars that were spent so that we did not get any electricity out of those plants. The Auditor General's report told us that it was actually a \$1-billion mistake that

was made there. That is significant when, right now, the stability of our system is not always what it wants to be.

We have generation capacity and transportation capacity in areas where we don't need it anymore. I'm really happy that my colleague from Timmins—James Bay just walked in, because Xstrata used to be a big user of electricity, and that worked out pretty good, because we have, I would say, fairly large generation capacity right next to the Xstrata plant. So Ontario was generating electricity, and you had a consumer right beside that was gobbling it all up. It was a marriage made in heaven. Now we have all this generation capacity but nobody to buy the electricity because Xstrata, the biggest user, has gone to Quebec where they pay one third in electricity prices that they were paying a couple of kilometres further west when they were in Ontario. So now, the people using the system are left to pay a whole lot more for electricity that is not really needed anymore. It is needed in other parts of our province, but it is being generated right there in Timmins, and Timmins can only use so much electricity, when their industries close up shop one after another and cross over to Quebec because they are able to set up shop over there at a third of the price of what we pay here in Ontario. I'm just giving those as examples of how important it is to have a robust long-term plan for electricity and energy and how we have decided that the best way to do that in the future is to leave this on the shoulders of a politician who will only listen to the expert that we have put in place when he or she feels like it—not really good.

1530

Not far away from Timmins, in my riding, is Gogama. There are many, many areas of this province that have less than adequate reliability when it comes to energy. I have Mike Cooper from Gogama—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know Mike.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, he is a well-known man in the area. He sent me the power outages for the last year. I'm going to read them into the record because I want people to realize that not every part of the province is served the same way. As we are privatizing our electricity system with the sale of Hydro One, I don't know how interested those shareholders are in making sure that the electricity system is reliable in Gogama.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is it a cost centre or a revenue centre?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a cost centre.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't know how interested those new shareholders of Hydro One are in making sure that the electricity system is reliable in Mattagami, but I am interested. I want everyone, no matter where you live in Ontario, to have reliable electricity because our standard of living depends on it.

Last year, on April 13, 2014—and I'm going to go through from April of last year to April of this year—the power went out from 17:08 till 22:15 that day. The next day, on April 14, the power went out from 7:55 in the morning till 8 o'clock, a short period of time. Two weeks

later, on April 30, the power went out from 12:40, shortly after noon, till 12:55.

On June 4, the power went out at 10:50 in the morning, and it came back a few minutes later. On June 22, the power went out at 1 o'clock. It came back 10 minutes later. The next day, on June 23, the power went out at 6:08 p.m., at night, and it didn't come back till the next day, at 1:12.

On July 13, the power went off at 7 o'clock in the morning. It didn't come back till 4:20 that afternoon—the whole day without power. On July 17, the power went off at 8 o'clock in the morning. It didn't come back till 9:30.

On August 28, the power went out at 11:30 in the morning. It didn't come back till 1:30 that afternoon.

On October 3, the power went out at 12:20. It didn't come back till 3:55 that afternoon.

On November 27, the power went off at 12:30. It didn't come back till 4:24 that afternoon.

On December 27, the power went off at 7:14 at night. It didn't come back till 9:10 that night. On December 28, the power went off at 11:50 that night. It didn't come back till the next morning at 8:45.

I want you to realize—I will keep on reading—that this is Gogama. It is December 28, 2014. It is minus 43 degrees outside, through a blizzard, through really windy conditions, and you don't have power.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No hydro and a polluted river.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No hydro and a polluted river. Yes.

On January 13, the power went off at 7:30 that night. It didn't come back till 6 o'clock the next morning. Everybody's putting that together? It was over 12 hours in the middle of the winter where those people didn't have electricity.

On March 3, the power went off at 6 a.m.; it came back at 7 a.m.

On April 22, the power went off for 10 minutes—they didn't give me the hours.

On May 23, the power went off at 6:35 at night, and it didn't come back till the next day at 6:30 in the morning. On May 29, the power went off shortly past midnight, 35 minutes past midnight, and it didn't come back till 7:20.

I wanted to read this into the record, Speaker, because you know what that means? That means that in the middle of the winter—and lots of people in Gogama draw their water from the lake—your water line has frozen. That means that it will take you days and weeks to thaw it out. That means that not only did you spend the night freezing in the dark in your home, but then, for the next two or three weeks, you're not going to have water. Because, like a lot of people—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —your heat trace doesn't work when there is no power. This has happened to me the same; it has happened to Gilles the same. No electricity? The heat trace doesn't work, your line freezes, and you're done for the winter.

I'm telling you this, Speaker, because when you can't rely—we ended up buying a generator at our house, and

most of my neighbours also bought generators. If you're going to Gogama, most households in Gogama that can afford it will have bought their own power generator. That means that, in the middle of the winter, with your slippers on and your parka over top, you go into the garage and you crank this thing, hoping that it will start. And then, every now and again, you get up in the middle of the night to put more gas in it so that your water line doesn't freeze and so that your furnace can continue to go. We have no natural gas where I live and where those people live, but lots of people heat with oil. But it doesn't matter if you heat with oil or propane; your furnace won't work if there is no electricity.

So it's a real, real hardship that I don't wish upon anyone, but this can only be fixed when the good of the people of Ontario is put at the top, when our long-term energy plan is put in place so that, when we identify areas of weakness, when we identify areas that need correcting, those people have an opportunity to be heard, their needs are taken into account and actions are put into the plan to make sure that they don't have to go through this winter after winter after winter.

But what are we doing to address their worries? We are putting all of the responsibility on the shoulders of a politician. All the structures that we had put in place to have an independent third party using best evidence to move things forward are going out the window with this bill, Speaker. It will now be on the shoulders of the minister.

I am worried. I am worried when I see that Hydro One is being sold and when I see that shareholders are there to make money. There's nothing wrong with making money; this is how the economy rolls. But it is wrong to make money on a utility that has such an impact on the quality of life of the people of this province. To compare selling Hydro One to the 407—I have never used the 407, but I use electricity every single day. Most people in my riding don't use the 407, and we're just as good with or without it. I have no problem with people using it, but it's a choice. Electricity is not a choice. It doesn't matter where you live in Ontario; you need it. So I'm worried about the sell-off. I'm worried that we now have a private ownership that will demand return on equity for the money that they invest, when we already know that they are a part of our system that needs correction and that those people's voices have a hard time being heard. I don't want everybody outside of the big urban centre to go through what we are going through in northern and rural Ontario with a power system that we cannot depend on, where each and every one of us has to have our own backup plan. It's not right. It's expensive. It's polluting. There is nothing good that comes of that.

1540

Those are only the first two parts of the bill, but I just looked at the clock, Speaker. There were some very interesting things I wanted to add with the feed-in tariff program and the energy conservation that I won't have time for, but they're no better than the first two I talked about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to respond, just in a couple of minutes, to the member from Nickel Belt. I listened very carefully to her remarks.

In the body of her remarks, which lasted some 20 minutes, she stressed, on any number of occasions, the need for long-term planning. She used the expression “a robust plan.” Then she again spoke about the need for long-term planning in the electricity and energy field.

That’s exactly what Bill 135 is designed to do. What we are doing is we are enshrining a long-term energy planning process—and it’s a planning process. The planning process is going to be transparent and efficient. It’s going to be able to respond to changing policy and system needs. In other words, the plan has to be nimble to be able to respond to needs as they develop.

We have adopted a number of initiatives that are going to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole conserve in managing energy. The heart and soul of Bill 135 will do the following: It is going to ensure a consistent, transparent long-term planning process; there are going to be amendments to the Green Energy Act to introduce some new initiatives there; and it’s going to support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by a consultation process.

What is really important in Bill 135 is that it is going to enshrine, in law, a requirement for extensive consultation with the public, stakeholder groups and aboriginal groups in the development of these energy plans. That’s what’s important: that this consultation requirement is enshrined in law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It is a pleasure to add my comments to the speech that the member from Nickel Belt gave. It is interesting: When we talk about long-term planning, we know that this government has never had a long-term plan in anything. So it’s rather interesting that they would use that term.

It’s been said here many times that municipalities across Ontario oppose what this government wants to do with the hydro sale. Also, the Green Energy Act certainly is a big issue in my riding that has been opposed by the people of my riding and, certainly, of rural Ontario.

I introduced a resolution not too long ago. I remember that I had some 250 municipalities back that resolution. It had to do with joint and several liability. And what does this government do? They ignored them. So it doesn’t surprise me that this government would ignore the people of Ontario. They’ve been doing it for so many years now.

It worries me that one person, the Minister of Energy, will have complete control over what’s going on with the energy file, because that’s when it can get too political. He doesn’t have to listen to anyone who knows something of the energy file. He or she can just do as they please, the way this legislation is written. So I agree with the member from Nickel Belt that this is going to be an issue going forward. When the minister has complete

control of such an important file, such as the energy file, I think the people of Ontario will have a real worry on their hands if this legislation is passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is saying, “Trust me. Don’t you trust me when it comes to energy policy? Trust me, the minister; you know that I’ll do everything right.”

What you’re doing with this bill is taking away requirements under the Ontario Energy Board, under the IESO and under the Environmental Assessment Act, where there were requirements for certain things to happen. When it comes to drafting an energy plan, when it comes to siting a transmission line, when it comes to siting a new power project, there are processes where the public has a right to be able to be involved in the consultation and the decision-making around those particular projects. What the government’s doing here is they’re saying, “Well, you know what? Trust us. We have a really good, stellar record when it comes to energy policy in this province, and we are going to take away those requirements under the OEB, the Environmental Assessment Act and the IESO, and we’re going to give them to the minister. Trust us. Everything will be okay.”

Do you guys remember what happened with the gas plants? That was only because they were trying to save five seats—and the plan worked. We spent \$1.3 billion and we saved five Liberal seats. That was a really huge success for the Liberal Party. Then we had this thing called smart meters, which are so darned smart, they’re driving our hydro bills through the roof, and the government is saying, “Trust us.”

The minister got up a little while ago and said, “Oh, this is really good because now we’re going to have this process where the minister is going to go out and consult”—only if the minister chooses. It says in the legislation that the minister may go out on consultation. He or she will decide what the consultation will be about, he or she will decide the scope of the consultation, and—here’s the best one—when it all comes back, he or she will decide what to do with it.

Mr. Paul Miller: That’s a deal.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is a deal for the Liberals to write a blank cheque on energy, something we can’t afford to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It’s unfortunate that I only have a couple of minutes, especially in response to what’s being discussed here this afternoon—plus I’m losing my voice a little bit, coming down with a cold. I know it’s really a particularly sensitive topic for members from the NDP, particularly the member from Timmins–James Bay, from what I recall of our time together on the justice committee, and certainly for members from the Conservative opposition.

I will only say this, though I know it’s not about this bill, even though they keep trying to dredge this up as it

relates to the gas plants. I know both caucuses, Conservative and NDP, have a bit of selective amnesia given that they made commitments in that 2011 campaign that exactly mirror the action we took on behalf of the people of Oakville and Mississauga.

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You can hear by that reaction exactly how sensitive that member is to hearing the truth on this particular matter.

The only other thing I would say, in listening to members from both caucuses speak about this bill, Bill 135, is that by and large, with a couple of exceptions, they tend to neglect the actual bill itself and want to spend their whole time reciting their selective version of history over the last 12 or so years since we came back to power. Our focus when it comes to the energy system has been to rebuild, restructure, improve and enhance what was a disaster of a system left over by years in office by the Conservative Party and, prior to that, five years in office by the NDP.

I know that neither the Conservatives nor the NDP like to believe that they have any culpability for anything that occurred in Ontario prior to 2003. Fortunately, the people of this province feel differently. That's why time and time and time again, when they've been presented with options, they have chosen the Ontario Liberal way forward.

I only have a few seconds left, but I can remember what it was like in this province when we were powered by coal. I can remember when our system was on its knees and we had brownouts and we had the blackout. We have none of those anymore. We are moving the province forward. I urge that all parties support Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Nickel Belt for her response.

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M^{me} France Gélinas: My feelings are a little bit hurt right now because he said that I didn't talk to the bill. That's all I did. I talked to the first two parts of the bill. Some of the other speakers talked to other things, but all of my remarks had to do with basically weaknesses that I had identified in the bill with ideas as to how we can change things to make this better and to put the responsibility for a long-term plan—yes, we do need a long-term plan for energy planning. We need it in every sector of the government, whether it be in health and education or energy. Long-term planning is something good and something we support, but how do you make a robust long-term plan? It is not by putting all that responsibility on the shoulders of a minister. It is by making sure that you have third parties who are knowledgeable, who bring evidence-based decision-making forward for the best of all of the ratepayers and for the best of the people who live here, and we are going in the exact opposite direction of that. We are taking agencies that are third-party, evidence-based agencies and telling them, "You will only give us information when we ask you, and you will only give us the information that we

have asked you. If you know of something, an impending disaster coming, if we don't ask you for it, don't tell us."

That's not the way I want energy planning to be done, and this is what my remarks were about. To say there will be extensive consultations when 83% of Ontarians tell you they don't want you to sell Hydro One and you go and sell it anyway—it's hard to feel warm and fuzzy about being told they will consult, because consulting is one thing, but listening and acting upon what you heard is a completely different thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have about 20 minutes this afternoon here to speak on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

I had an opportunity a little earlier this afternoon to offer a couple of minutes' worth of comments on the new proposal being brought forward by the minister. I talked about the coal conversion policy, the positive impact that had in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and the cost driver that was connected to that decision that would have been a cost driver associated with any of the parties in the Legislature, because, of course, all three parties made the same commitment on coal replacement—unless, of course, the other parties had no intention of replacing the coal plants in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan. Perhaps we'll have a chance to find out a bit more about that.

But on the bill, I talked earlier about the minister going forward with a different long-term planning process. That's the central theme of the bill. Of course, it's no surprise for any of us here in the Legislature this afternoon that the opposition parties would use this bill as an opportunity to speak less about the bill itself and more about energy costs and energy pricing in the province of Ontario. That's not a surprise. We would have expected that, and that's exactly what has transpired here. It's understandable to some degree because we all understand the sensitivity around energy pricing in the province of Ontario and, I would say, the energy file, period.

This has been part of the discussion, I would say, since I was first elected in 2003. Energy transmission, generation, pricing, the OEB and the like have been a chronic, constant theme of discussion since I have been here for 12, going on 13, years. I would say that, for me—and I'm going to get to the energy costing piece of this soon. I remember very clearly that the argument that was being made in relation to forestry and the reason at least being put forward by opposition parties for the decline of forestry in Ontario was energy pricing. Speaker, this was a very spurious argument, I think it's fair for me to say. In fact, when I've spoken about this publicly over the last 12 years, I have often given credit to the Conservatives, because they rarely would put forward energy pricing as a cause for the forestry decline in Ontario. They knew it wasn't the case. It was primarily the third party, the NDP, that would continue to make the spurious argument that energy pricing was somehow responsible for the decline of forestry in Ontario.

People following this argument, especially those in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan and northern Ontario, will know very well that forestry first started to get hammered before the global recession hit in 2008. In 2005, 2006, forestry, you could say, was the canary in the coal mine. For a variety of reasons, forestry was affected before any of the other industries that came to be affected by the global recession. There was a variety of factors that caused forestry to decline in the province of Ontario, just like it declined in BC and just like it declined in Quebec. I reference those two provinces because they are the other two major forestry jurisdictions in Canada, along with Ontario.

So when the spurious argument around electricity pricing was being made, primarily by the NDP, trying to say that this is why forestry was declining, they would have ignored the examples like recessionary times that were coming, like the collapse of the housing market in the US, which most of our product in Ontario—about 90% or 95% of it is exported into the United States. So as goes the United States, pretty much so goes the forestry industry in Ontario. Then the housing market had declined. They would have ignored that point.

They would have ignored the part that, when we were elected in 2003, the Canadian dollar was at around 73 cents and appreciated to \$1.10 while we were in government. A 1% appreciation—a one-cent, rather, appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar, representing about a \$3-million hit to one company in Ontario, times 37 cents. But the opposition parties would have ignored that and, of course, they would have ignored other factors like global competition.

Speaker, think about it. We listened to the opposition parties, and, again, primarily the NDP, say that forestry declined because of an increased cost in energy. They would have led people to believe that if only energy costs were lower, then nothing that had happened in forestry with the carnage and the loss of thousands of jobs would have occurred. Of course, that argument is absolutely ridiculous because if you think—even the most cursory investigation or attention to the matter would show people that this industry began to decline in 2005-06. We had only been in government for about two years by the time the industry had started to decline. It's obvious to anyone who paid attention to the issue that electricity pricing had nothing to do with what was going on in forestry.

Yes, it was one of those input factors for forestry that we could help to address and help the industry to get on its feet, stay on its feet and survive this downturn, which we did. We brought in several programs that helped to address that. But I listened to that argument for a very long time and I'll tell you, Speaker, it was tough to listen to because there were actually people who were making life choices, who lived in those forestry-based communities, who thought, "Yes, come on, government. Just lower the price a little bit. Just take the cents per kilowatt hour down a little bit and my mill is going to start back up, or my sawmill will reopen."

Of course, Speaker, given all of the other factors that I listed here, anybody would have known that wasn't the case. But people were making life decisions on that, and it was a spurious argument. You just had to look to BC and Quebec, which have always had lower energy costs than Ontario, because most of their energy is old and it's hydraulic; they're very fortunate that way. Well, those jurisdictions ended up with as many job losses in the forestry sector as did Ontario. So I just offer that as some background in terms of my broader discussion on this bill.

I started off by saying that while the bill is primarily about a new long-term energy planning process in the province of Ontario, the opposition members have taken some time to focus their comments primarily on costs. I want to talk a little bit about that today, if I can, as well. I have heard others say that since we came to government, the cost of energy has increased by two and a half times. All right. Let's talk a little bit about what went into those costs. I heard one of the Conservative members—I forget who was speaking a little bit earlier—who talked about that and was quoting numbers. Here is what I remember, and I stand to be corrected, but I think my memory is pretty good on this: When we came into government, the price of a kilowatt of energy in the province of Ontario was somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. That will be used as the baseline—

Interjection: It was 4.3.

Hon. Bill Mauro: —through which—4.3; I think that's what I said. So that will be used as the baseline through which they will get their calculations to say it is now two and a half times as high. But there are some things that are being left out of the argument, because here's something else that I remember. When the Conservatives were in government, before we formed government in 2003—and, again, there will be two-minuters from the opposition benches, and perhaps they can correct me if I'm wrong. But the way I remember it as well, Speaker, was that that 4.3 cents really wasn't the true cost of power. They used that low-water mark to show how much the price has gone up to make the gap look bigger.

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But what I remember, Speaker—and again, I stand to be corrected, and I'm open to hearing the comments from the opposition members—was that the price was actually capped. They had actually capped it at 4.3 cents. It wasn't the true price of power. As I recall, the true price of power was actually about 20% higher. I think the true price of power when we came into government was actually about 5.3 or 5.5 cents—

Interjection.

Hon. Bill Mauro: —or even more—at least about 20% more than was being charged on your electricity bill.

Let's just think about that one driver for a second. We're talking about from 4.3 cents to 8-point-something now, off-peak. This is the two-and-a-half-times number that they're using. But If we think about it and think for a

second that it really wasn't 4.3 cents but was 5.3 or 5.5 or perhaps a little higher, we realize then that the increase really wasn't as great as the opposition members would want it to sound like.

But also, where was the money being made up from? If we don't argue that the Conservatives had artificially capped the price of energy, how were we paying for it? Well, we were paying for it not from the rate base, but we were paying for it from the property tax base.

Here is what the official opposition had done before we came into power in 2003: They had artificially capped the price of energy—unless somebody wants to tell me I'm wrong—because they knew it was politically unpalatable to charge people, on their energy bills, the true cost of that energy, and they had transferred that extra cost, that extra approximately 20%, off your rate base and onto your tax base.

Okay, let's discuss that. If that's your policy position, that's fine, but let's just make sure we're clear on it. As I understand it, that's what they did. I'm making my point only insofar as to suggest that when we talk about that gap, the two and a half times, I would ask the opposition members to maybe tell me what it is, if I'm correct that you had actually capped it and it was really 20% higher when we came in. What's the number then? That's point one.

What else is a cost driver when it comes to the price of electricity in the province of Ontario, Speaker? Coal replacement policy, right? In 2003, all three political parties committed in their platforms to closing coal. Coal was 20% of total generated capacity in the province—5,000 or 6,000 megawatts of energy. I ask the opposition parties—and perhaps in their comments back, they can tell me—what their plan was to replace that 5,000 or 6,000 megawatts of energy. How were you going to do it? Maybe they weren't going to do it. But, Speaker, you had to do it. Clearly, that 6,000 megawatts of energy had to be replaced.

One example that I gave earlier, in my two-minuter—one small example—was that of the five coal-generating facilities in the province of Ontario, two were in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. Our government made the decision to keep both of those plants open. We converted both of those plants to burn biomass, and we converted them at a cost of about \$200 million. There are great benefits for the community of Atikokan, and there are great benefits for the community of Thunder Bay, and we've created a new industry in Ontario, the pellet manufacturing industry, that is creating more jobs. We've also created a long-term energy security situation for northwestern Ontario by keeping those two plants available—\$200 million.

They were two of the smallest plants. Nanticoke down here, in Lambton; and the other one, whose name I forgot right now, were the largest ones—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Lakeview.

Hon. Bill Mauro: The Lakeview plant. Out of the 6,000 or 5,000 megawatts that were produced by coal, those plants down here in southern Ontario were much

bigger. So this is billions of dollars of cost that was associated with having to replace that policy commitment, that both parties made, that represented 5,000 or 6,000 megawatts of energy.

I ask the members opposite: When you want to talk about cost, a 20% artificial cap on the price of energy when we formed government in 2003, and a policy commitment, that they had made when they ran in 2003, to close coal, and they never quantified the cost of building 5,000 megawatts of new energy generation in the province of Ontario. I would like to know what that number is.

Then, when we talk about the baseline price in 2003 and where we are today, perhaps they can tell me, really, how they would have mitigated that cost and how much of that cost they would not have had to assume if they had the honour and the privilege of being in government.

Of course, they would have had to do it. We needed the energy. A lot of that cost drive, the cap, had to be there if you want it on your rate base, and the replacement of the coal policy had to be there as well. Those are two points.

You heard my colleague, the member from Vaughan speak a little bit earlier when he had his two-minuter. We were talking about the state of the energy system when we formed government in 2003. We remember it very, very well. It is not an exaggeration or hyperbolic to say that the system was not in good shape; that the system needed significant investment; and that when we were elected in 2003, we talked very clearly of having an infrastructure deficit and part of that infrastructure deficit was the transmission infrastructure in the province of Ontario. We knew that. I think all three parties represented in the Legislature today will acknowledge that.

The costs that we invested in the transmission infrastructure in the province of Ontario are significant. I can't quantify how many billions it was, but the question, again, back to the opposition benches, who are spending a lot of time talking about costs today—I think it's fair of me to ask them about the artificial cap, coal replacement and what you would have done about the state of the transmission infrastructure in the province of Ontario should you have formed government. Would you have just left it? Would you have attended to it? If you had attended to it, how much would you have attended to?

One of the commitments that we've made is the east-west tie line. The east-west tie line is a line that exists somewhere between Wawa, Ontario, which is about six hours east of Thunder Bay, and Thunder Bay—about 300-odd kilometres of transmission line. We've committed to upgrading that line and basically doubling its capacity so that electricity will be able to be both imported from east to west and exported, if necessary, from west to east. The cost with just that one transmission project is estimated to be somewhere in the \$500-million to \$600-million range. I'm not even sure how much it is, but that is part of the massive investments that we made in the transmission infrastructure.

I give it back to the opposition members, again, to ask me: When you want to talk about two and a half times

the price from when we came in, I would ask you to tell me how you would have managed to carry on and take in some of those costs. Perhaps it would have been the same policy they had when it came to coal conversion or the artificial cap. Maybe it would have just been transferred to the tax base. I'm not sure, Speaker. I don't know what their approach would be.

The opposition members will also have you believe that green energy has been or is a significant cost component about the increase in the price structure of Ontario hydro. That's simply not the case. It is simply not the case. In terms of the total percentage increase on your hydro bill, whatever that may be, a very small portion of that is related to green energy.

And Speaker, they will only talk to you, when they talk about green energy, about wind and solar. They won't talk about hydraulic. Up near Kapuskasing, in northern Ontario, we constructed a 450-megawatt hydraulic generating facility. I'm very familiar with it because a lot of the tradespeople out of the locals in Thunder Bay have spent two, three or four years working on that particular project: 450 megawatts of clean, green—that's also green—green energy. Beck III here in Niagara Falls—how many megs is Beck? I think it was somewhere near 600 or 800 or 1,000 more megs.

When we talk about green energy, they only want to talk about wind and solar. I've just rhymed off about 1,500 megawatts of new energy generation that is green, that is hydraulic, that is part of that total energy mix, but they won't talk about that. That goes back into the PC speaker who asked about how you were going to replace the 5,000 megawatts of energy that used to be produced by coal, that no longer is produced by coal, that you committed to do as well. I would expect that at some point they will have an answer for that.

We've been in government now for 12, going on 13, years. You could throw into this mix about where the costs came from—inflation. What else is lower—in the city of Thunder Bay, I know that their energy and water rates have gone up by about 80% in the same amount of time—about 80% over the same period of time since we came into government in 2003. They're paying more for water; they're paying more for sewer. All energy infrastructure, of course, was going to have gone up in that period of time.

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Speaker, the point is that there are some very significant pieces here that were unavoidable, and I think the opposition parties are aware of that. Hopefully, they'll have an opportunity to make some comments on it.

I have just about a minute and a half remaining here. I want to close by saying that there are several significant programs out there on energy relief for people: the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, there's the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, there's a seniors' property tax grant, and I think the Minister of Energy has very recently just brought in a new program that is going to provide significant relief for low-income folks in the province of Ontario.

Finally, I think it's important to underline—and the Minister of Government Services spoke about this a little bit earlier when he was talking about peak rates and off-peak rates. We responded, I think, fairly and quickly to recommendations from the Auditor General, who in fact didn't think that the gap was wide enough and thought that the on-peak rates should be higher if we could be then more successful in encouraging people to shift their use to off-peak. Eight-point-something cents, I believe, is the off-peak rate. It's available 24 hours a day Saturday and Sunday and from 7 p.m. on weekdays until 7 a.m. in the morning.

We know not everybody can shift their load; we completely understand that. That's why there are a variety of other programs in place to assist. But, Speaker, it's important to know that if you shift your use, not only are you benefitting yourself, not only are you benefitting your bill as it arrives at your home, but you're also making it unnecessary for us to fire up peaking plants that are necessary when we reach those peak demand times for energy in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources. Oftentimes, the minister and I have lots of good chats. We're actually normally on a pretty even keel and see things from a similar point of view, but on this one, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that he said—I'll go on to have to really jam it to get two minutes in to refute a lot of them.

He talked a lot about closing coal. They promised to do it in 2006-07, but they just kept bumping it. If it was that important, I ask him, why did it not get done by 2006-07? Why did you not take the action to actually live up to your own promise to do that? It was 2013 when finally done.

I want to ask him some questions. He was asking us, as opposition, a lot of questions. What was the cost of power in 2003 when they took government, what's the cost of a kilowatt of power today, and what's it going to be in three more years? They're already predicting that it's going to be 40% more than today, and that's without the fire sale of Hydro One that I bet you they've put in. I don't think you probably want to talk to me a whole lot about—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Let's talk about debt, then. Mr. Speaker, let's talk about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to give you some extra time.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to talk about debt. This is a government that when they came into power in 2003, the debt of our province was \$129 billion. It is projected to be \$330 billion. The deficit is \$11 billion a year that they waste—\$7 billion a year just on a global adjustment charge. I don't know how they can in good conscience even want

to talk to us about debt that they've inherited. You ask them to look at those pages in front of you, Mr. Speaker, and ask them what the debt is going to be when they leave office; hopefully sooner than later or we'll never get out of the hole of debt that they continue to dig.

It scares me that they actually want to stand over there and pretend that everything is rosy and they've saved the world in the way they manage, when they've doubled the debt of our province in a short 12 years. It's unconscionable that they would continue to talk as if everything in our province is wonderful. They're doing some things that I'll give them credit for, but at the end of the day, hydro is a mess. It needs to be cleaned up, and we need to continue to push them to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister wants to know how we're going to do it. Well, let me give him some history here. I remember working in a large steel plant in Hamilton, and there was a thing called cogeneration that we were looking at. That would have taken coke oven batteries, taken the power and put it into our central boiler shop, which would have created lots of megawatts of power to actually power the city of Hamilton. Dofasco's coke ovens, Stelco's ovens, Algoma's coke ovens—up where he lives, near Algoma, that would have done that, but nobody looked at cogeneration. That's how we would have done it in the NDP. But you didn't look at that.

Secondly—and Speaker, I really get amazed. Let's talk about the Samsung deal that they signed with Korea. Guess what? I asked for the details on that and I got a document with all the financial details blacked out. I couldn't see what kind of deal—so I don't know what they did. I don't know where they're at. Last time it was \$7 billion; now it's down to \$4 billion. It's still on their Green Energy Act, which I still don't have access to, I might add. I don't know what they did, I don't know how they signed it, because they have the arrogance to think that we couldn't figure it out or we can't do numbers. We can.

I don't want to talk about the 60 million scandals they've had, where they've blown billions of dollars that we could have put in for refitting or retrofitting present systems that would have helped over the years. Over the last 12 years we could have fixed some of the transmission lines. We could have done a lot of maintenance with that kind of money that they've blown.

They don't talk about it. They don't talk about Samsung. I've never even heard them mention cogeneration. There are all kinds of other ways to generate power that they haven't even discussed because they don't think we have any value to have input into their wonderful world of liberalism. Well, we do, and the sooner they start listening to some people who have been around here a long time and know a lot about industry, they might be better off.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I hope anybody watching at home paid very close attention to what the minister was saying earlier in his 20 minutes, because he was telling them good, solid, common sense. He told it like it was.

Twelve years ago, when I was first elected along with the minister, the two of us were just aghast at the debt that the old Ontario Hydro had bequeathed to the system. It had been run up to some \$20.8 billion. That was the stranded debt. If you want to see where it's documented, you could find out in the 2010 Auditor General's report. I think it's on page 26 or 28 of that particular document. The Auditor General notes that, initially—referring to the last few years of the Conservative reign of error—not much effort had been made to pay it down, but that once our government was elected, the stranded debt began to gradually move down. As Liberals, we believe in dealing with debt the old-fashioned way: We pay it. Now that stranded debt line is about to go off of people's electricity bills. That just represents an old-fashioned way—paying it down—of dealing with debt.

There's lot in this bill. In fact, there's so much in this bill that you can only deal with a tiny segment of it at one particular time.

To reinforce a point made by the minister: Instead of buying power at about \$1 to \$2 a kilowatt hour, generated by coal out of the Ohio Valley, and selling it for 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in Ontario, incurring a loss of more than a dollar, now Ontario earns an export surplus of at least a third of a billion dollars a year selling electricity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This has been quite interesting. I think I want to comment on one of the files that was brought up by the government: the Green Energy Act. This has been one of the biggest blunders in Ontario's history. It is just incredible how much money is going into subsidizing Samsung and their companies for the Green Energy Act. They have created chaos. They have created hard feelings in rural Ontario. They have caused churches to break up over it. They've caused problems at schools because kids get fighting about it. Yet they persist in pursuing this terrible energy plan.

The thing about it is that these things are not efficient. They only run 30% of the time—and 30%, certainly, is a very high mark. I don't think they go up that high. They're spending all this money on the Green Energy Act and getting nothing from it, other than a lot of rich companies that are enjoying these subsidies.

Now we're finding out that some of these companies are offering millions of dollars to municipalities to get them to change their minds and allow these green energy plans to go on in the municipalities. That money is not the companies' money; it's taxpayers' money. That's how rich this is.

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This government persists in pursuing the Green Energy Act and allowing these turbines up in our communities.

Sir, I am very fortunate to have a riding that stopped a green energy project in my riding. It took a lot of money, a lot of time and a lot of tears to get this thing stopped. Fortunately, we got it stopped. It was going to happen just below the town I live in. You can go right across the riding—we got it stopped because nobody wanted this thing. This government wouldn't listen to the people who live in that community, but they persisted, they got it stopped, and I'm so proud of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I want to thank the members from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Mississauga—Streetsville and Perth—Wellington for their comments.

I noticed, Speaker, that out of the three opposition speakers, no one decided to address the issue of the 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour—when we were elected, that actually was 20% higher than that—so I will assume from the lack of comment on my assertion that that in fact was the case; that when we did come into government in 2003, the cost that people were being charged on their energy bill was actually 20% higher. People will understand that and they'll build that into, really, how much it has increased since then.

Nobody took any time to address the fact that I said it would have cost them billions to meet their commitment to close all of the coal plants in the province of Ontario—5,000 megawatts of energy that had to be replaced. We committed to do it. We did it. They committed to do it, but they don't accommodate for that or talk about that when they talk about the costs that now exist in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek made some comments on energy related to energy pricing and making things affordable for the people in the province of Ontario. Here's what I remember. In 2003, I took over from a wonderful lady who held the riding before me for 16 years: Lyn McLeod, who was the Minister of Energy. She was working in the David Peterson government. She had negotiated a contract with the province of Manitoba, as the Minister of Energy, to bring a thousand megawatts of clean, green energy from the Conawapa project in Manitoba into Ontario, through northwestern Ontario. It probably would have been the largest infrastructure build in the history of northwestern Ontario, and it would have provided a thousand megawatts at about four-point-something cents for 20 years. We had the deal. The NDP won the election in 1990. Do you know what they did? They cancelled that 20-year deal at four-point-something cents—clean, green energy—and then they paid the Manitoba government \$130 million in 1991 or 1992 to get out of the deal. So that's a great record they've got when it comes to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to please come to order so we can continue this debate in an orderly fashion.

Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to join this discussion on Bill 135, which has a rather unimaginative title: the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. It's not a particularly gripping title. It really doesn't tell us what's in this legislation. In fact, the Minister of the Environment made a very brief speech about this and really didn't tell us about anything that's in it. I don't know whether the parliamentary assistant explained what's in this legislation either. So here we have a title that's kind of repetitive: It's a statute; it's an act; it's a bill; it's a law. I'm not sure, if you pull out a dictionary, if a lot of people understand the difference in meaning between a statute and a law and a bill and an act. It is unfortunate that it has been written this way. This probably isn't the reason, but I haven't had any phone calls about this bill; I haven't had any emails.

I knew I was going to be speaking to this today, so I googled the legislation on the weekend—there's nothing there. The bill is there. Hansard is there. There's a list of the various acts that it amends, but there are no comments from the public; there has been nothing in the media. I'm not sure if this government sent out any news releases about this legislation. Again, I just really ask the question: Where is the citizen participation? Where's the involvement of people in this province with respect to what we're told could be enshrining in law some very significant changes, changes that maybe have been going on for years under the table—and finally decided to make them legal?

So, Speaker, we have a bill before us: It's an act to amend several statutes, to change some regulations and to deal with long-term energy planning. In a very brief statement in the House—I mean the minister had an hour to talk about this—he talked about increasing competition, it's still a little unclear how that's going to occur, and to enhance ratepayer value; that's very important, given the tremendous increases in the price of electricity to ratepayers.

Now, he talked about empowering the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO. Just a bit of a fact check on that, my research—the research of my party—indicates that this will not further empower the Independent Electricity System Operator. In contrast, it will do exactly the opposite. It will remove much of the independence of the IESO—far from empowering this particular body. I guess we take the minister at his word—empower IESO to competitively procure transmission projects.

Speaker, I have a transmission project in my riding down in Haldimand—Norfolk. Electric power towers march across Haldimand county, coming out of Niagara. They run from the Allanburg transformer station, continue west across the county; then they stop. The lines go down into the ground; they're anchored in the ground at the south end of Caledonia.

This project was sabotaged nine years ago. I vividly recall seeing the Mohawk warrior's flag flying on top of the tower. This would be 300 feet up in the air, right where that tower meets the main street of Caledonia,

Argyle Street, just a few hundred yards from the intersection with the main provincial highway, Highway 6, coming down south from Hamilton. Very clearly, Hydro One workers were not on those towers. Very clearly, Mohawk warriors were on the towers. That was nine and a half years ago. There are no wires. The towers march across. Regrettably, a number of them have been destroyed. They have been used as lookout towers by militants over the years of chaos and mayhem in the Caledonia area.

So what you see when you enter the main entrance of Caledonia, when you drive into town, there's a nice green sign, I think it has a picture of the bridge, saying: "Welcome to Caledonia." You see these gigantic pulleys up on the towers that were meant to pull the wires up to continue the link, essentially, not only to Allanburg transformer station in Niagara, that link with Niagara Falls in New York state through Allanburg, to the Caledonia transfer station which, regrettably, was torched—that was a \$1-million damage done by militants—and to continue on to the gigantic Middleport transfer station, just north of Six Nations, just north of the Grand River.

It's a 76-kilometre line, again, to ensure the transfer of electrons back and forth between the United States and Canada. Hydro One has been unable or unwilling for well over nine years now to complete the last five kilometres or so of this power line. You can see it when you're on Highway 6. I think I count about 14 or 20 different power towers partly disassembled with no wires. They were famously used to blockade the main street of Caledonia. They were famously used to be thrown off an overpass onto the provincial highway down below, obviously not the original intent of this transmission corridor. No electricity goes through here to the Middleport transformer station.

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There has been some media on this. Very recently, Paul Bliss, with CTV, reported something we've known locally, and I have certainly raised this a number of times in the Ontario Legislature. Again, the recent news from CTV: "Since 2007, Hydro One has had permission from the provincial government to bill taxpayers for its interest payments" on this \$100-million project.

I think the original cost was projected at \$116 million; I know that Hydro One did their due diligence. Years ago, I attended meetings where they mapped out where the new towers would be going on an existing corridor. That corridor has been there for many, many years. It was simply replacing antiquated towers. For \$100 million in capital cost to build this power line, taxpayers have paid nearly \$50 million to date in interest alone for a power line that has never transmitted any electricity, certainly in the last nine and a half years.

Much of this legislation is directed toward issues of transmission: "The powerline was designed to bring 800 megawatts worth of electricity into southern Ontario. This is equivalent to the amount of power that Ontario gets from one of the nuclear reactors at the Darlington

Nuclear Station." Again, this is according to Paul Bliss with CTV.

The provincial government indicated that it's okay because Ontario doesn't need the electricity right now. We do know that 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in recent years. The province made reference to the recession slowing down manufacturing, obviously reducing the demand for power.

I have a quotation from Hydro One. They were obviously asked, "How come you built this gigantic transmission corridor out of New York state and there has been no electricity?" I quote: We "respected the request by the community to stop work"—I represent that community, Speaker. "However, they remain hopeful that when outstanding issues are resolved"—they've been outstanding for nine and a half years—"we can proceed and complete construction of the line."

Construction of that line was shut down in Caledonia, in Haldimand county, and in spite of what Hydro One says, the community did not request that Hydro One stop work; far from it. The community has had to put up for nine years now with a wireless, incomplete power transmission corridor scarring the south entrance of town. It's adjacent to the still-occupied subdivision of Douglas Creek Estates.

Certainly, there are so many Liberal scandals locally that we talk about over the last 13 years. I consider this the mother of all scandals. One measure: There have now been four books written about the Six Nations/Caledonia scandal. I would suggest, if members here haven't read any of those four books, that they please do so to get a better picture in your minds with respect to the chaos that has continued down there, south of Hamilton.

I just wanted to comment briefly on the sale of Hydro One. There's obviously short-term gain—we see the money coming in from the IPO—but it's coupled, regrettably, with long-term pain. There is some hope locally. Perhaps the new ownership of Hydro One would have the wherewithal to get an injunction to complete this Caledonia transmission corridor.

This month, as you would know, Speaker, brought another unaffordable electricity increase as a result of failed policy, in my view. On average, we're now paying an additional \$53 a year. That's on top of an additional \$68 a year last spring.

This month saw the provincial government's IPO as well, the initial public offering of 15% of Hydro One. The shares were put on the market at \$20.50. Also this month, Ontario's FAO, the Financial Accountability Officer, released a report confirming something Ontario's opposition has been saying all along: The Hydro One fire sale is a bad deal. It's a bad deal certainly for electricity users.

Patrick Brown, the opposition leader, explained during question period: "It makes no sense to sell an asset that will only net \$1.4 billion while you lose an asset that brings in \$700 million each and every year." There was a poll conducted by the Ontario Energy Association, and 80% of residents in Ontario believe the fire sale will raise

their hydro bills. You combine increasing hydro bills with so many tax increases, tax increases oftentimes related to what's going on with electricity in the province of Ontario, and we get the calls in our offices.

I feel we've been doing just about everything we can to try to stop this sell-off. It's brought up almost on a daily basis. Perhaps the government can reconsider. The 15% is already out the door, but I remain hopeful.

In the 2015 budget, Ontario announced that intention to sell 60%. In 2015-16, the 15%, as I've indicated, would be put on the market, and the balance in subsequent years. By selling 15% of Hydro One, Ontario's net debt would initially be reduced between \$2.4 billion and \$3.9 billion. However, in his report, our Financial Accountability Officer warns that net debt would eventually increase as a result of this partial sale, as the costs of forgone revenues from Hydro One begin to exceed the initial benefit.

As we know, Hydro One is wholly owned at present by the province of Ontario. It's an electricity transmission and distribution company. They're not looking after the nuclear generation. In 2014, the company operated 97% of Ontario's transmission capacity, with the largest distribution system in Ontario, again, covering something like 75% of the province.

As sole owner up to the present time, the province currently has claim to all of the net income of Hydro One: approximately \$750 million last year. Following this 15% sale, the province would have claim, obviously, to only 85% of this net income. The FAO estimates that the sale of 15% of Hydro One would result in a reduction of approximately \$50 million a year, and each additional sale would increase this amount of forgone income.

The FAO—this is the Financial Accountability Officer—does recognize that there could be potential for improvement with respect to Hydro One's net income as a result of changes and as a result of the influence of new owners. The fact remains that Hydro One is one of the worst-performing electricity distributors in North America, and they spend an awful lot of money to try to maintain that dubious track record. Even among electricity distributors in Ontario, Hydro One, according to the National Post, "performed so poorly that it was considered an outlier," along with Toronto Hydro.

This morning in question period it was raised again. The new CEO makes something like \$4 million a year. On average, when you look at other employees of Hydro One, they come in at about 10% above comparable wage rates elsewhere.

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So, again, locally, there is hope that new owners may see the way clear. They may have the wherewithal to complete this Niagara transmission corridor through Caledonia, shut down by protesters for now well over nine years, and perhaps it's contained within Bill 135, where more power will be transferred to the minister to help complete this Caledonia transmission project.

I've got a bridge in the area—two bridges, actually. I've raised this before, as with our transmission corridor.

It's been well over a year now that the Cayuga bridge has been shut down. The bridge was originally built in 1927. We clearly needed a new bridge. It's on a provincial highway. It was a provincial project—a provincial bridge, not something that can be blamed on the local county or blamed on the federal government. But, again, a victim, as with the transmission corridor, of being shut down by intimidation by militants.

We've got another provincial project, 13 years overdue: the Caledonia bridge. Again, it was built in the 1920s. I use it all the time. Haldimand county has now realized that because of the dysfunction that they have observed in the McGuinty-Wynne government—they have asked this government—it's not very often that you will see a municipality ask a province to not put money into infrastructure. They have cautioned this government: "Don't start construction on the Caledonia bridge. You're not going to get anywhere," having seen what has happened to the Cayuga bridge, having seen what has happened to this Niagara-Caledonia electrical transmission corridor. Again, is Bill 135 here to help? We shall see.

Just to wrap up, I will remind people that on May 1 of this year, the on-peak price of electricity climbed from 14 cents a kilowatt hour to 16 cents. That's a 14% increase. And it will be double the new off-peak price of eight cents a kilowatt hour. We've already got some of the highest electricity rates in North America. We saw the increase last spring—no, I mentioned last spring, on May 1. We saw a recent increase on November 1. Again, just this month, another electricity price hike: 8.7% for on-peak rates. November 1 saw another \$53 added to the average bill. Couple that with the May increase I just mentioned, which, at that time, came in as a \$68 price hike. There's no way people in my area can afford to heat their homes with electricity, given what is going on in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened closely to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk comment on Bill 135. I think one of the key points that he did make is that there hasn't been a lot of outreach on this bill whatsoever. In fact, the minister has done his lead, but the critics have not had an opportunity to respond, so it's a very unusual circumstance for us to be in this House debating a piece of legislation which, ironically, lessens the transparency and the accountability of the Minister of Energy.

There are some people, though, who are paying close attention. Like the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, I went out and did some research. There is this paper in the Canadian Energy Perspectives and it's on Bill 135—the governance model. It's written by George Vegh. This is what he says about Bill 135: "The net result of Bill 135 is therefore to ensure that the main energy institutions—the IESO and the OEB—are focused almost exclusively on implementing government plans and directives. The government has always been steering the direction of energy policy. It is now rowing as well: It is in direct

control of every policy instrument available. From a governance perspective, it could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all."

I think that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk was sort of leaning in the direction that the language of a piece of legislation is also very important.

There's a lot of talk of what the minister shall do. Well, we know that this government is very good at conversations. This government is very good at talking about consultation, but it isn't always so good at listening to the feedback that they get, especially from informed voices—in this instance, from the energy sector.

I share the concerns of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I look forward to delving into this piece of legislation a little bit more, later on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to join in the debate and comment on some of the remarks made by my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk.

I do have to pick up on one that I thought was very interesting. He made the assertion that Hydro One was among "the worst-performing electricity distributors" in Ontario. Yet the same member says, "Oh, we shouldn't sell it. But if we do sell it, perhaps it's a fire sale." Somehow or other, I can't square that circle.

The fact of the matter is that Hydro One does need some private sector discipline infused in it, and that's exactly what the province has done while being able to take some value from it, maintain complete control over the corporation, and devote that money towards something that we very desperately need, which is expanded infrastructure.

I come from Peel region. In the morning, when we get on those trains, from the very first one that leaves around 6:30 in the morning until the very last one that leaves at 8:30, those trains are full. There is no question that we need that infrastructure money to be able to expand public transportation in Peel region. We need that infrastructure money to be able to expand public infrastructure all through the 905 belt and everywhere in Ontario. Those are some of the things that the member made an assertion around that I think really need to be explored.

If the member says Hydro One is among the worst-performing electricity distributors, then how can he be against bringing some private sector discipline into that company and also rewarding its decision-makers with performance-based incentives? If they don't hit the target, they don't make the money. That's a very easy concept to grasp.

Frankly, Speaker, I think this act—although we didn't talk a great deal about it—is going to change that landscape and enable Ontario to do the things it desperately needs to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand and reflect upon the comments that my colleague from

Haldimand–Norfolk shared, because he raised many concerns, the first one being that it's unbelievable, how this government chooses to waste money time and time again. In fact, I should correct my record: It's not just "waste money;" it's "waste taxpayers' money." It's money that is becoming less and less in their pockets—because they are continuing to choose to mismanage almost everything they touch.

I think the member from Haldimand–Norfolk has every right to express his frustration and his absolute disbelief, in some cases, over this power line that has been left to rust as a monument to poor decisions by this Liberal government over the last 10 years.

It's interesting that he also said the government, in response, said, "Well, we respected the community and we stopped work." Those words really stuck with me, because throughout Ontario, since 2009, community after community has asked this government—they've taken the government to environmental review tribunals. They've pleaded with a variety of ministers—the energy minister has changed in recent years; the Minister of the Environment has changed in recent years. They've all sent letters saying, "Please stop the unnecessary development of industrial wind turbines," which are wreaking havoc across this province, primarily from an economic perspective, but we also have concerns with regard to the environment, and health as well. Just recently, Senator Bob Runciman again expressed his concern over migratory routes of birds and bats and how they're being interrupted.

I really applaud this member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I did listen to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and I certainly agree with some of his presentation, but some of it was self-imposed, I must say. I do recall, back when hydro was deregulated by a certain party, that at the time, the Liberals were criticizing the official opposition for doing that as government. I remember being on Stoney Creek council at the time, and we were devastated with what happened to Stoney Creek Hydro when it was amalgamated and became Horizon. Our numbers went up.

But the worst part about deregulation was the middlemen they created. Why the prices in Ontario are so high is because we have all of these middlemen, whether it's Reliance—all these guys that come to the door and try to sell you programs, and now they've put a bit of a stickler into that, too.

So here we have the Liberal government, who criticized the official opposition, the Conservative government at the time, about deregulating, and now they're doing the same thing: They're going to private sector. It sounds like history repeats itself. Here we go again in the cycle. Who makes all the money? The lawyers, the bankers, Bay Street and all the middlemen. Who loses? The taxpayers of Ontario. Once again, we're going down

that road and they're disguising it with only 15% now, but that will go up, and certain people are going to make a lot of money out of this.

One other deal that they're not talking about and don't want to talk about is the Samsung deal. That is a nightmare. It started off with \$7 billion; I think they got it down to \$4 billion now. I haven't seen anything about it. I haven't seen a word. In fact, they blacked out all the financial aspects. I couldn't see anything. I can't even have a judgment call on it. I'm telling you, when that deal comes through, our kilowatt hours are going to go up even more. When you guys deregulate, when you guys privatize, the losers are the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That, I believe, concludes the time we have available for questions and comments. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo made mention of the report by George Vegh, where he explains that this effectively removes independent electricity planning and procurement from IESO and removes transmission approval from the OEB. Both of these types of authority will be transferred to Minister of Energy. As I said, we have our hopes up. Maybe the Minister of Energy will have the wherewithal to do something about that particular transmission corridor.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Huron–Bruce, talking about the waste of money of this government on behalf of not only ratepayers but taxpayers. The one thing that people hate is government waste.

Comments from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville—maybe the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek might appreciate this, given his comments on Samsung and the private sector. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville—again, the to and fro and the twisting around. If I can quote you correctly, you were singing the praises of private sector discipline. That's interesting.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's what you guys say all the time.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Private sector discipline: We say that and you say that.

I might leave this question for you—it's an old saw, Speaker, if I may: How many Liberals does it take to screw in a light bulb? The answer? "None. We'll let the private sector do it."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and bring the concerns of the citizens and residents of Kitchener–Waterloo to this place, as it relates to Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of revisionism this afternoon, a lot of creative writing has been going on, so you can say that there's a heightened sense of imagination in this place. But it's really interesting to hear that the government does a lot of retrospective talk, because

they don't really want to focus on the current situation that exists in this province right now as it relates to the energy sector. Whenever this government does talk about energy, it raises enormous levels of concern. I know that my colleagues here share my concerns as well.

Right now, in the province of Ontario, this is a government that has brought in the largest single hydro increase in Ontario's history, Mr. Speaker. That's why they're so focused on the pasts of former governments.

As it stands right now, 185 municipalities—duly elected—have passed resolutions and have raised their concerns about the sell-off of Hydro One in the province of Ontario. This government has not listened to that.

This government's very own Minister of Energy actually stood in this House and absolutely spoke out against the sell-off of Hydro One and the privatization of Hydro One—when he was mayor of Ottawa, and then when he came back as well.

This is a long-standing issue of who operates the energy system, who runs the energy system, and who's benefiting now from the sell-off of Hydro One as well. Despite this and despite our continuing chance every single day to ask questions about the sell-off of Hydro One and around any future plans to sell off our province's publicly owned assets, this government refuses to be transparent.

This piece of legislation is very important, Mr. Speaker. It does not improve transparency; it does not improve accountability. In fact, I will argue that it does exactly the opposite.

You can't blame the people of this province for having some serious trust issues with this government. There is a long, outstanding and growing list of trust issues around any number of issues, from eHealth to Ornge to gas plants.

I keep all of the Auditor General's reports in my desk because they are good resources to have. They highlight the incompetencies around contractual agreements, around delivering public services. Quite honestly, she has done a great job. I depend heavily on the Auditor General in this province.

The interesting piece, though, as I highlighted earlier from George Vegh's piece—people just need to be very clear about what's happening with this piece of legislation. It was introduced on October 28 and it was tabled. Bill 135, if enacted, effectively removes the independent electricity planning and procurement authority from the IESO and transmission approval from the OEB. Both of these types of authority will be transferred to the Minister of Energy. The minister will produce long-term energy plans that would be binding on the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO, both of whom must issue implementation plans designed to achieve the objectives of the government's plan. This is really a centralization, if you will, of power in the Minister of Energy's office. This runs counter, Mr. Speaker, to the language that we heard from the Premier and from members of the government, who promised openness. They promised transparency. Quite honestly, we're not going to see any of that. This does not strengthen those concepts at all.

We also heard a lot about the activist centre, around inclusion; whereas with this piece of legislation, there's the possibility of consultation but everything still rests solely in the centre of power, which is in the Minister of Energy's office. When all of that power is there and there are all these long-standing issues as they relate to the policies around energy and the implementation of those energy plans, and the politicization of the energy portfolio, you can't blame the people in this province for having some very legitimate concerns about this piece of legislation.

The mantra of this government should be: "We will consult. We may consult. But we probably won't listen." That has been the record of this government.

I have this picture of the Minister of Energy sort of like a Mike Myers character, like Dr. Evil: "We may pay attention, but we probably won't."

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I think that when you have the centralization of power on such an important and key ministry—energy policy holds everything together. There are some significant conservation concerns going forward. Energy ties the economy together, and there's obviously a significant economic impact. When energy policy is done right, it draws investment to those jurisdictions. I think I can highlight Quebec and Manitoba, which are doing a much, much better job on their energy portfolios than the province of Ontario.

So when I do hear the government talk about the long-term energy plan, I get concerned—as Ontarians get concerned—because this is a tangible issue that they see every single day. They might not understand the \$1 billion in the eHealth scandal. They might not understand the \$1 billion in Ornge or the gas plants, but they do get that bill every single month. They see those costs going up, and they have good questions.

Even the Financial Accountability Officer asked some good questions for the province. I was so pleased to see this independent officer of the Legislature come out with his report, An Assessment of the Financial Impact of the Partial Sale of Hydro One. Of course, there were some bumps along the road, you might say, because there was apparently a leak from one of the ministries—we're not quite sure where.

The Financial Accountability Officer on the sale of Hydro One is very clear in his essential points. On page 1, it says, "In years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale." The second most important point: He says, "The province's net debt would initially be reduced, but will eventually be higher than it would have been without the sale."

I don't think it's a coincidence that the balance point is pretty much around the next election, and then the debt starts to accrue again. This is a perfect example of an energy policy decision that is essentially burning the furniture to heat the house. At the end of it, if you heard the member from Nickel Belt talk about the energy concerns in Algoma, where there are great incon-

sistencies in the level of energy and the level of costs and the consistency of actually getting energy—these are long-standing issues for northern Ontarians. After she finished her debate, the northern members had a conversation about, "What size is your generator?" Because this is the reality for the people in northern Ontario: The energy system is so inconsistent—it's as broken as it can be, and it's frayed and fractured—and now with the sell-off of Hydro One, it's like a double-down on bad energy policy.

With this act, you have all that power now centralized in the Minister of Energy's office. I hope I planted that Mike Myers picture for you and I hope that it stays with you, because that's sort of how I envision decisions being made. The politicization of the energy portfolio—this is a government doubling down on that.

To return to the Financial Accountability Officer, who raised some good questions on the sale of Hydro One—this is on page 12. He says, "There is much uncertainty around how the debt retirement charge (DRC) would be affected by the partial sale. The DRC is significant revenue for the province and a cost for consumers of electricity." So the question: "Does the province expect the partial sale of Hydro One to affect the date that the debt retirement charge would be eliminated?" There is no answer on this. With the passing of this piece of legislation, when it does happen, we'll just have to keep asking the minister. We have seen a lack of clarity around the answers, and we've seen a resistance—even when you FOI information, you get a lot of information that's been completely redacted. Those black, redacted pieces are essentially becoming very significant for us as opposition members, who I feel genuinely have a responsibility to come to this House and to ask the questions so that we can take that information back to our constituents.

I know from the back benches of both sides that people have serious concerns around the rising cost of hydro. When you have seniors literally coming into your office—it's been very fortunate because it's been so mild, and I'll sort of tie that back into climate change in a minute. But last November, we had seniors in our office asking for assistance because they already couldn't afford their electricity rates.

The other question the Financial Accountability Officer raised as it relates to the sell-off of Hydro One: "The single most important unknown in the proposed transaction is the timing of sales after the initial 15% sale in 2015-16. Timing would affect the province's budget balance...." He does an economic model of how this might look. He does a high and a low. Neither situation is particularly good for the people of this province. From a purely business sense—from a transactional sense—there's no clear win for the people of this province.

He goes on to ask: "When does the province plan future sales of Hydro One shares beyond the initial 15% committed in 2015-16?" We've made very strong points that it's not too late to stop this sale. With 15% already out there and Bay Street just totally so excited because they see the money, they see the dollar signs, what we

don't see, of course, is the value for the consumer, for the citizens. I think it's incredible that this is a government that will oversee the greatest transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector in the history of this province.

You can't blame us, Mr. Speaker, when we review Bill 135 and how decisions are being made, and ironically, how quickly the sale of Hydro One actually happened. Perhaps that is because there is a banker working right in the Premier's office. When you look at the infrastructure promises that all of this is predicated upon—in Kitchener-Waterloo, for instance, the Premier and the Minister of Transportation stood on that platform in the last election and said, "All-day, two-way GO in five years."

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They did promise us a bullet train, but even then we knew that was pretty out there, and even high-speed, actually. We would just like faster, perhaps a train that doesn't take two hours and 10 minutes to get from Kitchener-Waterloo to Toronto—a faster train.

But certainly, now that Metrolinx has released their report and we're out to a decade, they're sort of re-positioning themselves that, you know, this is a priority project for a decade. That's how slow they can work. The selling off of Hydro One is how fast they can move when they're motivated, obviously, for their own purposes. I just wanted to introduce that concept into this debate on Bill 135.

The questions around effectively removing independent electricity planning and procurement authority from the IESO and the OEB: Where is the motivation? There are some outstanding questions as to why the government moved forward with this. These questions centre around the residual independent authority of the agencies. Why do we have the OEB and the IESO, which ironically were established to use their independent processes and statutory objectives to implement the broad objectives of energy policy as reflected in legislation? Why is this government essentially saying, "Well, you know what? We're going to change your mandate"?

As it relates to the act and the language in the act, at least once during the period prescribed by the regulations—and there's a regulation that changes the environmental assessment piece as well—"the minister shall, subject to the approval of the" LG, "issue a long-term energy plan setting out and balancing the government...."

"The minister shall, before issuing a long-term energy plan under subsection (1), require the IESO to submit a technical report on the adequacy and reliability...."

So there's a lot of "shall." The language should be a red flag for us. We see red flags on this side of the House all the time because the government has given us so much to work with in that regard.

Effectively, at the end of the day, the Minister of Energy will be writing our long-term energy plan. It's going to be the minister. That's where the power is going to be. If this is the case, as I do think it is, what will be

the role of the IESO or the OEB? Part of the IESO's mandate is to take the politics out of it and allow experts to design energy plans for our province. Instead, this government is further politicizing this independent operator and will start issuing directives to them.

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So this is not the openness and the accountability that we were promised. This is actually the exact opposite that the people expected under the headline of "progressive." It isn't progressive to just add the political lens, if you will, to the energy file. We've seen, actually, how poorly that works out for the people of this province. When the gas plants were still on the radar, the decision, first of all, to move those gas plants and the political implications that moving those gas plants would have on the political fortunes of the Liberals—that did not work out for the people of this province. Furthermore, making that company whole when there was no legal duty to do so should be something that we learn from. Yet, now we have a piece of legislation before us that actually further politicizes this important portfolio.

So where do we go from here? Our critic has not had a chance to do the hour lead, nor has the PC energy critic. We hope to reach out to our constituents and to reach out to stakeholders to make sure that they fully understand the impact of this piece of legislation.

But just one last quote by George Végh: "The net result of Bill 135 is therefore to ensure that the main energy institutions—the IESO and the OEB—are focused almost exclusively on implementing government plans and directives. The government has always been steering the direction of energy policy. It is now rowing as well: it is in direct control of every policy instrument available. From a governance perspective, it could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all."

This is a system that needs checks and balances, because we have a track record in this province, under this government, of really doubling down on bad policy. So perhaps this government is tired of listening, because they've made the point of enshrining some consultative process, but they've made no commitment to listen to the people. We know that they're very good at conversations. We know that they're very good at promising the round tables, the stakeholder groups and the focus groups. We've seen this over and over again. But, more to the point, what the Hydro One story tells us is that this government will move fast if it suits them, and they create and craft legislation, which usually has a purpose that does not necessarily meet the needs of the people of this province.

With the highest energy rates in Canada—those energy rates affect the entire economy—and the environment that we are currently in, it's definitely concerning for us as New Democrats, and I've heard similar concerns from the PC Party. But it is more critical than ever that governments have the levers of public ownership to curb global warming and institute real conservation programs. There's no indication that this piece of

legislation will add to that conversation, and, certainly, we have some serious concerns with it going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I listened attentively to what the member for Kitchener-Waterloo was talking about, and one of the things that she asked was, "Where do we go from here?" She talked about a commitment to listen, she talked about consultation and she talked about checks and balances, or what she incorrectly asserted was the lack thereof.

I draw her attention to section 25.29 of the bill, and I'll just read some sections of it.

"(4) The minister shall, before issuing a long-term energy plan under subsection (1), consult with any consumers, distributors, generators, transmitters, aboriginal peoples or other persons or groups that the minister considers appropriate given the matters being addressed by the long-term energy plan, and the minister shall consider the results of such consultation in developing the long-term energy plan."

Just to read more:

"(5) The minister shall publish notice of consultations....

"(6) The minister shall take steps to promote the participation of the persons or groups....

"(a) scheduling one or more consultation meetings....

"(b) providing for the participation of persons or groups....

"(7) On issuing a long-term energy plan under," blah, blah, blah.

It goes on and on. In fact, the truth in the bill is exactly opposite to the assertions made by the member. Part of the point and purpose of the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act is to provide a means by which people affected by or interested in energy issues could, in fact, meaningfully consult; to provide a means by which the government can effectively listen to some of the ideas that people bring up; and, as happens in the long-term energy plan, to incorporate some of those ideas into the province's planning.

We're coming up on the third of the incarnations of the long-term energy plan. The long-term energy plan scheduled for late 2016 or early 2017 is in fact going to build on the successes of the first two long-term energy plans. Part of the way it does that is by expanding consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I listened to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I thought she did a great job raising a lot of concerns that we're hearing from people across the province. Obviously, the government isn't listening to their constituents, because the facts speak for themselves.

We know that by 2018, energy bills are set to go up by an additional 42%. We all have to keep in mind that when this government was elected in 2003, rates were four cents a kilowatt hour. Now, with the increase in

November, they're up to 17 cents a kilowatt hour. That doesn't include the increases to the global adjustment and other lines on the bill.

We have half a million people unemployed and looking for work in Ontario today. We've got a government that is increasing hydro bills by 42% over the next three years. The only plan they have is to increase hydro bills and increase taxes in Ontario. It's going to continue driving jobs out of this province.

I can rhyme off a bunch of taxes they are talking about: the land transfer tax; toll roads. We know that in 2016 there are going to be the new property assessments that come out. I fear for farmers, for commercial business owners and for individual residential owners when these assessments come out, because I'm hearing, and I'm sure the government is hearing, that there will be quite an increase in those assessments, which means more and higher property taxes. As well, there's a new income tax rate in the province. It's going to hit 54% between Kathleen Wynne's or the Premier's increase and the new Prime Minister's increase.

When you look at hydro and all these other taxes, they're making Ontario uncompetitive. We need a government that has an economic plan for jobs in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: You know, Speaker, it was my understanding, when we got elected, that we were here to represent the people of this province—all the members. We were supposed to follow their wishes or at least lean towards consultation and having an open policy that they would get their say.

Well, in a way, they did get their say, because 180-odd municipalities and rising have said they didn't want hydro sold. We had five independent officers, who are supposed to be non-biased and non-partisan, send a letter to the Premier saying, "Don't sell hydro." We've had experts from all fields say, "Don't sell hydro."

I'm beginning to think that some people in this province are okay with scandals. I'm beginning to think some people in this province are okay with not being told what's really happening. I'm beginning to believe that people will elect governments continually, after all these mess-ups, if you want to call them that, and they'll get back into power. I'm beginning to wonder: Are people really paying attention to what's going on? If they are, are they being tolerant of these bad decisions, bad investments and bad leadership? They are. It's scary, Speaker, because it appears, if you're the Liberals, that you can do anything you want and you're still going to get elected in the GTA. I know why they call the city the Big Smoke now.

1720

I have a problem with this. I don't get it. What is going on in this province? People are not listening; they're not paying attention. They're being led down the path with blinders on. Hopefully they remember this in two and a half years, all the scandals—but I'm sure a

basket wagon will come out with all kinds of promises and gifts and they'll forget again.

Hopefully, they don't put them in again. My goodness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond. I thank the member for her comments.

I'll first begin, though, Speaker—there was a comment made by a member of the official opposition in terms of his perception of the uncompetitive position or nature of Ontario when it comes to a business environment. I would suggest, just briefly, in the little time that I have, that Ontario has been first or second for quite some time when it comes to foreign direct investment in North America. We have recovered—I forget exactly what the metric is—how many hundred thousand jobs, incrementally beyond where we bottomed out after the 2008 recession, with a very, very high percentage of those jobs being full-time jobs. So quite the opposite: Ontario, I would say, has done a very good job of positioning itself to be attractive when it comes to investment for the business community. I think we could even point to the fact that just this week, the Premier returned from her trip to China with some very good news indeed to build upon that.

More to the member's comments, speaking a bit about openness and accountability, or a lack thereof, you heard the member from Mississauga—Streetsville a little bit ago speak about how it says, right in the bill, "shall" consult, shall do this, shall do that—quite the opposite of what has been said. I would say that there is a very clear commitment on behalf of the minister that, under this legislation, should it pass, there will indeed be consultation.

As well, the perception that this is about centralizing decision-making ability and power: I would say, when it came to discussions around Hydro One and the broadening of ownership of Hydro One, we were talking about how the OEB still had control over those particular situations. Now it's trying to be made to look like somehow we're taking authority away—because they would argue that it really didn't do a good job in the first place and, in fact, they were unaccountable to the public.

Speaker, we think there's a fair balance to be found here, and hopefully this legislation will move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for her reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Mississauga—Streetsville, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for their comments.

It's interesting: The member from Mississauga—Streetsville had gone through the legislation and quoted, as did the Minister of Natural Resources, around the language of "shall." Right now, what actually speaks to the record is action. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville said, "Well, there's guaranteed consultation with First Nations." First Nations have this government in court. There was an agreement on Hydro One, but the

Chiefs of Ontario—I remember at AMO, he stood up and he said, "You know what? We're going to have to take this government to court, because even though there was an agreement, there was no consultation."

This just goes back to the trust issue. The sale of Hydro One is a breach of trust because it is the largest transfer of wealth from the public to the private sector. That is indisputable. The fact that this government had "broadening ownership"—you talk to anybody in any of our ridings. When you say "broadening ownership," there was clearly no reference to Hydro One, because that is something that people would have understood. They get those hydro bills, and their electricity costs go up every single month. In fact, the largest one just happened this past November.

The one concern—and I'm going to get this on the record—is that under section 7 of this act, it says, "For the purposes of clause ... the regulations may require reporting through the use of a prescribed reporting system, including an electronic reporting system administered by a third party...." I see the next scandal right here in a piece of legislation. I think that the concerns I raise today are valid, and I think that this government should do their due diligence and pay attention to some of the commentary, so that the people of this province don't end up paying the price for a poorly crafted piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate this opportunity to speak on this bill in front of us for a little bit of time. In case we've lost ourselves here, we're dealing with Bill 135. There are two parts to the bill. We're looking at system planning and we're looking at conservation. I'm going to speak a bit about both of those issues.

The previous speaker, from Kitchener—Waterloo, mentioned Mike Myers, and I have to get this off my chest, because I think she was painting a picture that in a movie, Mike Myers looked kind of evil or something. But I actually met Mike Myers. I will be short about this: I was on Toronto city council, and my office had contacted him because Scarborough was getting a bad reputation. We contacted him; we wanted to name a street after him. He agreed, so he came to our city council and I was able to give him a street name, Mike Myers Drive.

It was nice to do that and everything, but there was a bad part to the story. I'll be very quick about this, Mr. Speaker. The sign was put up, and that night it was stolen. It was taken away. Someone took it away and probably put it in their recreation room downstairs. What happened was that we had to have the works department put a second one up, higher up so it couldn't be stolen again, and it's still there right now.

So I got that off my chest. I just wanted to say that. He's a very nice man, actually. And this bill is a very nice bill, so that's how I'm tying it into this bill.

There are two parts to this bill. Conservation is one part, and the second part is the energy system and long-

term energy planning. Let me start with the conservation part and speak for a few minutes about that.

The conservation part here is quite simple. I'm going to read from some notes here: Large-building energy and water reporting and benchmarking would require large buildings'—50,000 square feet and above—owners to annually report their monthly whole-building energy and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and other building characteristics.

The second part of the conservation is water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances. We would set standards for such appliances as residential and commercial clothes washers, integrated washers and dryers, residential and commercial dishwashers, and commercial icemakers. I'm not going to touch on icemakers, but I'm going to touch on clothes washers and dishwashers.

I've had a couple of homes in my life. The first one that I bought already came with—no dishwasher, but a clothes washer and a clothes dryer. They consume a tremendous amount of energy. Around that time period, in the early 1990s, they started coming out with new appliances that would say "energy efficient," whether it be a residential clothes washer or a dryer. So eventually I changed out my dryer and my washer, and replaced them with more efficient ones.

What we're doing here is we're putting into place something very positive, to increase and make those things better—and also the icemakers, but as I said earlier, I'm going to speak mostly about dishwashers and drying machines, and clothes washers, as well.

I moved to another house in 2003, and actually had to buy, for the first time ever, a dishwasher. I never had one before. My wife saw it one day, before she moved in to live with me in the house, and she said, "Lorenzo, you've never used your dishwasher." I said, "I just do it by hand." It was a brand new dishwasher. She opened it up, and there were the instructions inside the dishwasher. She said, "You should start using the dishwasher." I said, "Yes, I like doing it by hand, though." But now we do use the dishwasher, and it doesn't consume too much energy, because it's a high-efficiency dishwasher.

And we do our clothes. We wash them and we dry them and we use energy-efficient products. We had a flood in our basement in 2012, so we had to take out the old ones, and we bought even better ones that are more energy efficient, and we saw our energy bill go further down.

1730

Again, what we're doing here is we're trying to make sure that appliances, whether they be commercial or residential—but I'm speaking mostly about residential ones—are efficient and take less and less electricity off the system, which is a good thing to do.

I just want to talk about conservation from another point of view, Mr. Speaker. I remember, when I was on Scarborough city council, my colleague—oh, she just stepped out. Another Scarborough member and I were on city council at the same time. The recycling program

started to become fashionable in the 1990s. I thought that no one was going to use the blue bins. We distributed them to all the homes in Scarborough, and I was convinced at that time, as I was the chair of the works committee, that people would not use these blue bins. Lo and behold, when they were first put out, people threw all their bottles, all their glass in there. I was surprised. The operators of the recycling machines had to come back on a second and a third day because they had so much stuff to recycle.

From those bins, we've evolved to the point, at least in Toronto, where you can actually get a larger bin, and the larger bin is getting larger and larger. They've introduced a very large bin to throw all the glass and other products in. You can throw cardboard in there and other items, as well, but the majority of it is glass, cardboard products and some other plastic products. It's a big step, because instead of ending up in a garbage dump, this is being diverted. Diversion is very important in saving on landfill sites and on improving our system. When you get the glass and you get the cardboard—I've seen how it works in the larger recycling plants—it's separated and then put into piles and recycled and reused. More and more, you can get all sorts of products that are recycled or made from recycled material, whether it be paper, cardboard—a lot of it is recycled—and even some glass products come from recycled glass.

Again, when you start something, at first it seems awkward because nobody likes change, but after a while they adjust to it and people actually like it more and more.

We're at the point now where one week we put out our recycling bin and the next week we put out our garbage bin.

Recently, my wife switched out the larger garbage bin to a smaller one. I asked her, "Why did you do that?" She said, "We don't have much garbage."

Everything is diverted, either through the recycling bin—in Toronto, they have what is called a green bin, where you can put all sorts of things: your banana peels, all sorts of vegetables and fruits and other things that can be reused again or turned into compost or turned into fertilizer or something of that nature.

I think conservation is crucial, and part of it is energy savings. The conservation part requires the large-building owners to report annually their building's energy and water consumption, their greenhouse gas emissions and other building characteristics. I talked about the clothes washers and the dishwashers and the icemakers, but there's another part to conservation, and that's the large-building energy and water reporting and benchmarking. Larger buildings of 50,000 square feet or more—the owners have to report annually on their monthly whole-building energy and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and other building characteristics. Some would ask, why would the government do that? We're trying to improve the system. If they start reporting and we find out that they're using a lot of energy, we can work with them to try to reduce the amount of energy being consumed.

The term “greenhouse gas” is becoming more and more popular in the news. We hear about it all the time. There’s a climate conference taking place at the end of this month in Paris.

Again, I express my condolences about what happened over the weekend in Paris. Let’s hope that this becomes less and less frequent.

There’s going to be a climate change conference. I know that some of the world leaders really want to go there. The President of the United States is big on climate change and wants to go there to discuss greenhouse gas emissions and other issues as well. I know our Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, wants to go there as well and talk about ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other ways to combat climate change.

We know it’s true. The Republicans in the United States might not think so, but we can see it on the planet. There are islands in various parts of the world that 20 years from now will be under water, in the Pacific Ocean or in the Indian Ocean. We’re doing our part to try to conserve and preserve what we have right now.

Another thing I want to mention before I forget, with the conservation part and to conserve energy, is that I remember when those energy-efficient light bulbs came out. A lot of people were kind of, “I don’t know if I want to buy an energy-efficient light bulb,” especially in the Christmas lights. They thought, “No, no, I want the old kind of Christmas lights.” But lo and behold, people are buying them now. I go to Rona or Home Depot or other big-box warehouse stores that sell these products, as well as smaller hardware stores, and you can get nice Christmas lights—coloured lights—that are energy-efficient and they look just as good as the old ones that our parents used to put up outside the house when we were kids.

I can see them. They’re going up now, already, even though Christmas is more than a month away. People are already lighting up their houses, and it’s very, very low—you’re saving a lot of money because you’re not spending a lot on electricity, because we created these light bulbs that are extremely efficient. I think we even have them here in the Legislature. It’s become normal. At first, people don’t feel great about change, but later on, they get used to it and they’re actually conserving more and more energy. Some of these light bulbs last seven years. That’s a long time compared to the old light bulbs that you have to change every two years or every three years. Seven years is a long time.

They have become the norm. You go into the lighting section of a store like Rona and you want to get light bulbs. Any type you want to get, for the most part, are energy efficient, and, again, the bill goes down and less and less money is spent towards energy. It’s good for the environment and it’s good for the consumers because they save money as well.

These things take time to change. People are uncomfortable with change, for the most part, but then, eventually, they get used to it. Like I said, with the recycling program: People are recycling and we’re diverting more and more stuff away from the landfill. It’s

being used or recycled, and it’s a good thing for the consumer and it’s a good thing for the government, and it’s a good thing for the planet on a larger scale.

I also wanted to speak for a few minutes about system planning. Again, I’m going to have to read straight from here. The legislation that is in front of us today would enshrine the long-term energy planning process that developed the 2010 and 2013 long-term energy plans to ensure that future long-term energy plans are developed consistent with the principles of cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community and aboriginal engagement. So we’re looking at this on a long-term basis for planning in the future. We want to make sure that energy plans in the future are consistent and are cost-effective, reliable and are clean energy, and involve communities and even aboriginal engagement, so we’re not going to do it on our own. We want to be able to consult with other groups, other companies that are out there, even the aboriginal community, to make sure that we have system planning in place that helps to create better and more efficient clean energy.

Again, I think in the future more and more groups will want to work with the government. I think the city of Toronto wanted this to happen as well, so it becomes Ontario-wide. We’ll have cost-effective, reliable clean energy, and it will be done with engagement of the community.

1740

You look at the idea of planning for the future. I think about—in the future, for example—the thermostats in people’s homes that have evolved over time. We’ve got new ones coming out now that are basically smart thermostats. When you’re at home, it will heat or cool the house in the wintertime or the summertime, but when you’re not there, the furnace doesn’t have to run all day long. For example, for air conditioners: The air conditioner can actually shut off during the day and turn on just to keep the temperature a certain way so that when you get home, it’s still cool enough. You don’t waste energy on thermostats that run all day; they’re just based on the information they get from the thermostat. It’s the same with better furnaces. I’ve gone through a series of furnaces in my lifetime, and they’re getting more and more efficient. These kinds of things—the thermostats, better furnaces and better air conditioners—all help to save on the electricity bill.

We, as a government, have done a lot of things regarding energy in general, to try to improve energy over the years. We’ve put smart meters into homes. I don’t wake up at 3 in the morning to do my laundry, but I’ll do my laundry on the weekend or after 7 or 8 p.m. at night. It saves on the bill.

It’s the same with light bulbs. We don’t need to keep them all on all the time. There are ways that light bulbs could be shut off, whether it be by a sensor that goes in the front—if someone is walking in front of it, the sensor comes on. It turns on and then shuts off again.

I’ve recently been looking into getting a better thermostat. The person who checks the furnace every

year said to me, "You've got to put one of these into the house because they actually save so much money."

This summer we didn't have the hottest summer in the world, but still it was hot enough that we had to have our air conditioners on once in a while. They would shut off. It doesn't have to be cold all day long in the house. It would shut off at certain times and it would come back on when it would get hot. We should have a system by now—we're into the 21st century—where the house should have already equipped inside of it a thermostat that's able to recognize the temperature in the house and be able to function accordingly.

It's the same with better furnaces. My parents' furnaces would consume a lot of energy. In fact, I remember that in my riding there were some houses that had very old furnaces. You could still see on the side of the house a chute where the truck would come by to put coal into the house where the furnace was located. The house would operate on coal. We all know coal is dirty. We've shut down the coal plants in Ontario—all the coal plants. I don't think there was a single smog day in Toronto, whereas in the past there used to be smog days. Seniors were told to stay inside. People who had asthma or other breathing conditions were told to stay inside because the smog was so bad. I remember seeing photographs on television of this yellow haze in the summertime above Toronto, and other parts of Ontario as well, which was caused by the coal plants that were burning.

We've gone from that to much more cleaner energy just in my lifetime. From the coal furnaces, we've gone now to very smart furnaces. Most of them run on natural gas and they shut off when they're not needed to be used.

I wish I had more time to speak; it's coming down really fast. But I wanted to say one thing: I actually got to see ovens that burned wood. So there would be slots that you'd pull out, you would put wood in there, and, when they would turn on, they would heat up the oven, and you'd be able to use the oven that way.

We've come a long way. I think this bill is just improving on that and trying to get us to have better and better programs in place.

My time is up. I wish I could speak some more. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Listening to the presentation by the member from Scarborough Southwest about the various measures of conservation and energy efficiency—again, it's important, because so many people are desperately trying to save some money on electricity.

He made mention of wood. I built my home, I guess, in the early 1980s. When you build your own house, you continue to build. I set up everything for solar, actually—the right angles. My house faces southeast. However, as everybody knows, the technology is not there yet for solar. I've been waiting for well over 30 years. Some time it will come. But the member made mention of using wood. I don't have access to natural gas. We have gas wells on our farm. It's wet gas. We don't run it up to the house. I was encouraged, when I was building my

house, by the Ontario government to "Live Better Electrically." I had no choice: I put in a forced-air electric system.

We've had two very cold winters. I don't use that electric system. I have to heat with wood. My wife and I go through 20 cords of wood a winter. I'm desperately trying to get wood in right now. There's no frost on the ground. It's a little difficult. I really find it passing strange that the way I'm heating my house now on our farm, I've had to go back 100 years. I'm fine with heating with wood. It's not complex like our electrical system. There's no delivery charge other than me walking down the hill or driving my pickup truck down and firing up the chainsaw. It's real simple. How did we make our heating system so complex?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say to the previous speaker, I resemble that. It's the same story out at Kamiskotia. There's no way, out there, where you don't have natural gas, that you can afford to run electricity to heat my cottage, which is not so much a cottage any more; it's more like a house. But that's a whole other thing.

Listen, I just want to get to this bill and, yet again, remind people what we're debating here. We've got a bill where the government is saying, "Here, trust us. We're Liberals. We're good on energy policy. You know that we'll always do the right thing when it comes to the people and electricity and the hydro file. What we would like to do is take away any responsibilities that the Ontario Energy Board has, or the IESO has, when it comes to developing an energy plan, when it comes to planning how your electricity system is going to work. Don't worry; we're going to give that responsibility to the minister." Then the minister is going to be able to decide what the plan is going to look like, what the scope is going to be of any hearings that happen, who the people are who are going to be the ones who will be consulted, where they are going to go. And once the report comes back, "Should I or should I not take, as the minister"—says the Liberal member—"the recommendations that came out of this particular hearing?", it will be entirely up to the minister's office.

I think we should be wary of Liberals who are trying to sell us anything when it comes to energy planning. We know what happened the last time these guys got involved in the plan. They mucked around with—what did they call it again on the OPG side—the feed-in tariff program, which they're getting rid of, which worries me. What are they going to replace it with? The feed-in tariff program helped us raise electricity prices in this province through the roof, because we're paying more for private power than we are for public power. Now these guys are saying, "Put us in charge of planning so we can site transmission lines, we can site various infrastructure and electricity, and we, the government, are going to decide where that is, and you, the public, are not going to have the opportunity to really have your say." I don't trust them.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly pleased to rise in support of the comments that our colleague from Scarborough Southwest made this afternoon. He talked a great deal about conservation, and this whole area is extremely important to the residents in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. With the location of my riding on the Oak Ridges moraine, people are very concerned about climate change. They know that they're doing their bit when it comes to conservation, whether it is using those new light bulbs that last much, much longer than the old incandescent lighting systems—they know that they're doing what they can as individuals, using off-peak for their laundry, for dishwashers and so on.

I think what they also want to see is that business comes to the table on making some considerable efforts. A couple of the initiatives that are in this Energy Statute Law Amendment Act are going to be very important to my constituents. We know that in the energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings, property owners will be required to track buildings' energy and water use and their greenhouse gas emissions over time.

This will allow individuals to track how they're doing. It only makes sense, in terms of cost, to conserve, to reduce the use of energy. This measure will help families and businesses save money on their energy bills, and it will also mean that we won't have to build extremely expensive energy infrastructure to the same extent were we not to pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This bill is called "long-term energy planning"—and I would suggest to you that it's short-term, necessary, problem-solving emergency planning. They should have started this a long time ago and avoided all the scandals like eHealth, Ornge air ambulance, the Presto card, gas plant closures, and that big mistake of signing on to the Green Energy Act, which is solar and wind power, which is hugely expensive. Those were all huge spendings; a wasteful use of taxpayers' money, and here we are today trying to conserve because we have a shortage of energy. This is a huge intrusion into people's freedoms and their privacy—Big Brother coming into their homes.

What we should have done was gone to Quebec and bought hydro from them. They have copious amounts of hydroelectricity. They sell it to the United States already. We have power lines literally coming to the Ottawa River, out of Ottawa, hanging out over the water, ready to be connected to Ontario. We have another set of lines that goes across the province into the state of New York. The lines are there. The power would have been cheap. The solar and the wind power are very, very expensive. We are now in a situation where people literally can't afford their hydro bills and we have the most expensive

power in North America. We're driving industry and jobs out of the province. We made some big mistakes there.

What we should have done was carry on with the energy we're producing. We could have put all the scrubbers and technologies on the plants that we had and perhaps converted them to gas if we needed to. There is even carbon capture technology being used in Saskatchewan, which we could have used here in Ontario. We didn't need to do all the things that we did that wasted our money and put us in this terrible predicament where we've had to sell Hydro One and come up with legislation like this, which is a knee-jerk reaction to bad management.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments from the members from Haldimand—Norfolk, Timmins—James Bay, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills. They touched on various parts of the bill, and they also talked about other issues involving energy.

What I want to highlight again is that there are two parts to this bill: conservation and long-term energy planning. What we're trying to do is improve and make better our energy system. When I spoke earlier, I tried to mention the fact that it's an evolutionary process. We've gotten better at saving, whether it be in the recycling program or buying light bulbs that are highly efficient.

I remember a little argument; I just want to mention it. Maybe I'm too Toronto-based, and I apologize for that, but when the megacity was formed, I remember an argument that I had with the late Jack Layton, who was a councillor. He wanted to take money from Scarborough that we had reserved—Scarborough had a lot of leftover money—and use it to spend in downtown Toronto, because they didn't have the money. So he basically wanted to take the money.

We were upset, myself and—he's not here right now—the member from Scarborough—Rouge River. What we did was we said, "Okay, if you want to take our money"—I think it was \$90 million—"then the old city of Toronto has to put water meters on their homes." Mr. Layton was very upset about that, but they've done it now. We've had an improvement there. Downtown Toronto homes, the majority of them, have got water meters, so they have to be careful when they consume their water.

We're trying to improve that, and we're working on two fundamental areas: the conservation of energy and long-term energy planning. This again is an important bill, and I urge members to support it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close enough to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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of Ontario**

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**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 17 November 2015

Mardi 17 novembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't believe there is a quorum present. Is there?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Quorum, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. As you know, this bill amends three pieces of legislation: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Although it hasn't received a lot of publicity, this bill has the potential to impact a large number of people and organizations: injured workers, businesses, unions and non-unionized employees. As several people have mentioned, this bill is also taking some steps to support our firefighters. I want to acknowledge that there are some good changes in this bill, such as the fact that firefighters would be able to opt out of union membership or even opt out of paying union dues if being a member conflicts with their religious beliefs. I'm also pleased that there is progress on the double-hatter issue. For those who aren't aware, that refers to professional firefighters who live in another community and want to volunteer there. Many of my constituents' communities rely on volunteer firefighter

ers, so I'm pleased that we are getting rid of that barrier that prevents people from making that commitment. But there is still more to do.

One of the things we will want to see for our firefighters and for all our first responders is to ensure that they get the support they need for PTSD, which, as you know, stands for post-traumatic stress disorder. As our leader recently said during his speech to the police association, "If you're a police officer with PTSD, you shouldn't have to spend years fighting the WSIB bureaucracy to prove it." The MPP for Parkdale-High Park has introduced a private member's bill four times to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to lower barriers for first responders who need PTSD support and treatment. Our caucus is pleased to support that effort.

Last year, I was invited down to Windsor for an event, as the firefighters' union donated a number of portable carbon monoxide alarms to the department. The alarms are now attached to the medical bags that firefighters take to calls, so that if they walk into a home with carbon monoxide they are warned about it right away and take steps to protect themselves and everyone else.

While I was there, some of the firefighters were talking about some of the difficult experiences they've had, such as going to a call and finding out that the injured person was a family member. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I was a volunteer firefighter for 25 years, and I know there are some things you see that will stay with you for the rest of your life. We need to make sure that our first responders who are dealing with these things they have seen and experienced have all the support they need.

Over the last seven years, I've been working with fire services in a different way. They were very supportive of my private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, which made it a requirement to have a working carbon monoxide detector in every home. In fact, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters, and Kingston Fire and Rescue all spoke at committee and supported the bill.

Many others worked with me throughout the five years it took to get the bill passed and in the two years since then to raise awareness about the need for carbon monoxide detectors and the fact that they do save lives. We need public education about installing and maintaining detectors, and I want to thank the fire service for all their work on this issue. I look forward to continuing to work with them as we move forward.

Over the last few years, I've been pleased to accompany the Insurance Bureau of Canada to fire departments across the province to try to raise awareness. Through

those events, the Insurance Bureau of Canada has donated over 5,000 detectors that fire departments can give out to people in need or as part of their education campaign. I want to commend the Insurance Bureau of Canada for their work to save lives.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, this bill impacts more than firefighters; it makes changes to three pieces of legislation. One of those changes is that when two groups of employees merge who are represented by different unions, it will now be automatic which union will represent them in the future. I've heard some concerns about that change. It means that if there is a municipal restructuring or restricting of provincial organizations, those employees won't get a say in who is representing them. I think we need to hear from both the unions and the employees at a committee, because there may be a more democratic way to deal with this situation.

This bill also makes a number of changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. In my office, we hear from a lot of people who have challenges with the WSIB, and I hope that they will have a time to come forward in committee to share their stories and make suggestions on how the WSIB could do a better job. We've heard some stories about workers going through real hardships trying to prove their injuries to the WSIB. We've heard stories about them not listening to the worker's doctor. Their doctor says it's so, but that's not good enough for the WSIB. I hope we will have time to hear from those workers at committee.

I hope we will have time to hear from the businesses that are paying WSIB premiums. Every year, I do a survey of businesses in Oxford, and every year WSIB is one of the issues that comes up at the top of the survey. WSIB premiums are a significant cost, and they are only one of the payroll taxes that a company pays. They want to know that every dollar they give the government is being used effectively, because if it wasn't going to government they would be using that to create jobs and expand their business.

One of the biggest issues was the cost of doing business in Ontario. In the survey, 90% of Ontario businesses said they would be impacted by the proposed pension plan, and most of them said that the impact would be significant.

Today, I have touched on a few of the issues in this bill, but one of the challenges with debating it is that it does impact so many areas, so many organizations and so many people. Over the last few years, we've seen committee hearings get more and more limited. It's rare that committees travel with a bill to hear from people in different communities, it's rare that committee hearings are scheduled far enough in advance to allow significant advertising, and it's very rare to give organizations 20 or 30 minutes to provide a really thoughtful and detailed presentation. Too often, presenters are given such a short time that rather than ask questions, the MPPs are giving up their time so the presenters can just finish their speech.

0910

We know this bill impacts businesses and injured workers. We should hear from both of those. We should hear from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the board of trade. We should hear from firefighters, from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and from fire chiefs and from municipalities and their employees. We should hear from the unions and from non-unionized workers. During the leadoff speech, the parliamentary assistant said, "The government needs those partners to consult, to collaborate and to make improvements." I hope that he meant it and that he has the backing of his government for that statement.

A few weeks ago, we had a long discussion at the social policy committee about the public hearings for Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. We eventually agreed to three days of committee hearings, which created spaces for 40 people or organizations to present. And we had enough people to fill every single spot. There are people who want to come to share their concerns, who want to help us make the legislation better, who have the first-hand experience with the problems that we are trying to fix. I hope that when this bill goes to committee, we'll have an opportunity to hear from them, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to this bill, and we look forward to the rest of the debate for the rest of this session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member made an interesting comment about how employers aren't listened to by WSIB. I actually had a gentleman come into my office during constit week, where we have the opportunity to meet our constituents and listen to what they are having to say, and he talked about WSIB. This was an interesting example. The employee was injured at work; it was a construction trade. The employer acknowledged that he was injured at work and wanted to do everything to help the employee with rehabilitation and getting medical assistance. He was a young man; he had a young family. So it was very compassionate that the employer acknowledged the fact that when someone is injured at work, it can change your whole life, change your financial status, your marital status, because the pressure gets so bad. The employer wanted to work with the employee to claim through WSIB. But here is the little surprise piece in the whole story, Speaker: WSIB was giving them a hard time. They were giving the employer a hard time and the employee a hard time.

This system for WSIB is one of the most broken, bureaucratic systems I have ever seen when it comes to dealing with injured workers and giving people benefits. It's an insurance company. Insurance companies traditionally—when you're ill, you go and you get those benefits, you recover, then you come back to work and life goes on. But not when it comes to injured workers, and there is a reason for that: because there's an incentive program where the less injured workers you have in your

workplace, the more incentive you get, the more bonus, the more payment you get back for not having those injured worker claims. That doesn't make any sense, because in the construction trade, as in the example that I used, those are high-risk-injury jobs, and those workers need support when they're injured.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I listened to my esteemed colleague from Oxford. I invariably am impressed with the scope that he brings to the debate and some of his historical musings. He has clearly been one who has been dedicated on a number of fronts, to his credit. As I say, I enjoy whenever he contributes to the debate here, which is often, and we're grateful for that.

We all have a joint responsibility to move this legislation forward, as it speaks to several things that are very, very important. Legislation, particularly WSIB legislation, should impact workers and employers because they have a joint responsibility to public safety and making our community stronger and safer.

As one of only two members who, when in opposition, supported the private member's bill from the member for Wellington–Halton Hills on two-hatters, I'm pleased that there appears to be some pending resolution here on that important issue. If you have ever been a small-town mayor or councillor, you know the importance of that.

I would say in passing that the honourable member opposite did mention the pension plan proposal. I find it interesting that when Ontarians retire, 43% of them still owe money on a mortgage and 71% of them—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm trying to be nice—and 71% of them have no pension plan at all. So if we want to avoid a senior poverty tsunami, it's really important that we move. I'm pleased that the new federal government has agreed that they will respond to the request of every province in this country to enhance the CPP. Hopefully—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to respond to my friend and colleague from Oxford on his very thoughtful comments on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. I also just want to acknowledge his work on the Hawkins Gignac Act. He's been really tireless in travelling across the province promoting public safety. I listened very closely to his words.

I also want to acknowledge the Minister of Municipal Affairs, because he and I actually agree on the double-hatter issue. I'm glad that he acknowledged the member for Wellington–Halton Hills. He and I don't agree on his plans to put a tax on home ownership, but it's nice that we agree on this particular bill, Bill 109.

I also want to take this opportunity, because this government has this awful habit of closing off debate. I think that when the member from St. Catharines was in opposition he called it "choking off debate." I have a feeling, based on this government's history, that this will be

another bill where they will choke off debate, where they will limit the public's opportunity to comment. Our party—we've only really had, with the member this morning, eight of our caucus members who have spoken to Bill 109. We still have 19 members who are willing to speak. Speaker, we have six members here today who are here—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ready.

Mr. Steve Clark: —ready to debate this piece of legislation.

I want to remind members that there have been a number of speakers who have indicated that schedule 2 and schedule 3 of this bill, which affect the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act—there have been many members who have talked about the need for public hearings. Yet this government continues to say one thing and do something completely different. They talk about openness and transparency, yet they govern by time allocation and closure. It's a sad day for democracy in Ontario, Speaker, when that happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also want to add my voice to this debate. I want to thank the member from Oxford for his insight. I also want to give a shout-out to one of the beautiful cities in his riding, the city of Woodstock. We were able to chat a little bit about that yesterday in committee.

I think the member is absolutely correct when he says that far too often in this House we're seeing a trend where the government is unwilling to take bills that are in this House out into the community. We're not seeing enough input from and consultation with people who are outside of the GTA.

Previously, many bills were taken into other parts of the community, other areas of Ontario; and it was the right thing to do. It provided the ability to obtain insight from various regions in this province. That's an important thing and we're not seeing enough of that. I think that's a trend that's a wrong trend, a bad trend.

Again, when we talk about debate, far too often debate is being curtailed, debate is being shut down. It is contrary to the principles that this government has put forward as principles that they want to uphold: principles of accountability and transparency and being open. Well, cutting off debate is not in any way supportive of those principles. That's another issue.

When it comes to the actual bill, in terms of the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, it's essential that we look at how we can improve the condition of workers in this province. There are certainly some elements of this bill which will go towards improving their condition, particularly when it comes to workplace injuries and coverage.

0920

The other area, though, that's something we need to work harder on and work more diligently with is how we can ensure that workplaces are complying with the exist-

ing laws. That's going to require greater enforcement, and that's an area we need more focus on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for final comments.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Leeds—Grenville and the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton for their kind comments.

I noticed that all three of them talked in their presentations about the need for public consultation and the need to hear from the people in the communities. Particularly referring to the member from London—Fanshawe, when she was talking about the problem with the WSIB and that people come into her office and they—both the employers and employees—talk about the challenges. In my opening remarks, I mentioned the fact that we had to change the bill. When the government proposed what the hearings were going to be on Bill 73, they were going to give four minutes for each presenter to present.

Now, when we listened to the member from London—Fanshawe, it is impossible that the complaints that they had and the advice that they had on how we could make the WSIB better—that they could get that in in four minutes. It couldn't possibly be done. With a long debate, we finally got them convinced that we could go to 15 minutes for presenters. Mr. Speaker, I believe that's the important part for the whole thing, to make sure that when you have these hearings, the public can make presentations and they can tell the government what needs to be done and how they should fix. I think that's a very important part.

The second part is that I think it's also very important that the government, when they have these hearings, in fact listen to the public. Bill 73, again: We listened to presenters for the three days. Then, on the part that deals with the Ontario Municipal Board, one change that the government made on development charges, to what the people told us about the development charges review, the government said, "We didn't hear that, so we're not changing a thing." Not only do we have to hear from the public, we have to be willing to listen and make the changes they are asking for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. It's a broad title, Mr. Speaker, but that's because this bill covers a broad range of issues. In fact, this bill will be amending three separate pieces of legislation, pretty significant pieces of legislation, which begs the question of why the government felt that they all needed to be amended simultaneously. They could have allotted the appropriate time to address each issue individually, but instead they chose to bundle them up together.

Also, if the government is going to open up these pieces of legislation, why not really take a look? Why not talk to experts and stakeholders and see what changes

they feel need to be included? Why not hold consultations to hear from Ontarians across the province about how these three pieces of legislation could be best improved? It's not often that the government decides to crack open the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I can tell you, from the long list of injured workers and experts that I have spoken to about this, that there are more than a few people who would love the opportunity to weigh in and have their voices heard. Instead, they've rushed this bill and stacked the amendments on top of each other. It shows that this government is more focused on playing politics than it is on helping Ontarians. So we're moving two steps forward but taking three steps back.

I'll take the time today to detail what we do support about this bill and what we don't; what changes we believe are welcome and needed and what exactly the poison pill in this legislation is. Ultimately, we hope the government hears our concerns, realizes they are squandering an opportunity for bipartisan or tripartisan support of this legislation, and we hope the government removes the poison pill.

Schedule 1, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act: We support any and all provisions that give firefighters the same rights as other workers. Schedule 1, we support; what we don't support is playing politics with the firefighters' bill and layering in contentious, unrelated problems. Which brings me to schedule 2.

Schedule 2 is the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. Here, tucked into schedule 2, is the poison pill of this bill. This piece was added without consultations, without warning. It has to do with mergers—like in hospitals—involving more than one union or bargaining agent. When there is a merger, there should be a vote so that members can choose who will represent them. That's fair. That's freedom of association. That's democracy. This change, however, will do away with a vote, and the bigger union automatically wins. It doesn't mean that the members will necessarily be best represented, but this government doesn't care. Why on earth is this a government priority? Here is a way we can look at it: If the government is trying to control more of the workplace, they can strategically force mergers that would ensure that specific targeted unions are weakened and shut out of hospitals. I thought this was anti-bullying week. Here, however, we again find this government being sneaky in order to strong-arm and weaken the collective bargaining process and the democratic process. Shame on them.

Schedule 3, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act amendments: I'm going to take the most time today to discuss the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, the reason being that one of the included amendments is taken from my first-ever private member's bill, Bill 98, the Protecting Victims of Occupational Disease Act. Bill 98, if adopted, will close a loophole in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and protect victims of occupational disease and their spouses so they will no longer be denied loss of earnings and survivor benefits. It is deplorable that we allow workers to fall victim to occupational dis-

ease, and even more deplorable that their surviving spouses are being forced to fight for the benefits that they are entitled to after having lost a loved one.

I am pleased that the government has finally taken action and am happy to see part of the problem addressed, regardless of whose name is on the bill. However, my bill had two main parts, two areas of focus. Bill 109 addresses one; it addresses half of my bill. It's interesting that when the government first spoke on this bill, they only took 30 minutes of the allotted one-hour lead time—half the bill; half the time.

Speaker, Bill 98 seeks to protect the surviving spouses who have lost their loved ones to an occupational disease. The catch has to do with retirement. If someone is diagnosed with an occupational disease, whether a miner or a firefighter, it means that their workplace made them sick. An occupational disease is understood to be a result of exposure to an unhealthy work environment. When lawyers of employers realized that workers who were diagnosed after retirement, which happens with some diseases as they slowly progress—those who were diagnosed after retirement were not entitled to the same benefits, and their widows were not entitled to their WSIB pensions due to the fact that they had already retired—a technicality; a mean-spirited, awful wording loophole.

Both of these bills, my Bill 98 and this Bill 109, address the concern around widows' pensions. My bill, however, makes it retroactive; Bill 109 does not. The government is allowing for this injustice to go on if a grieving widow doesn't know about this change or how to file an appeal. That's not right. It's a halfway measure. We will bring it forward as an amendment in committee, to get that addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I'm still learning about bills, debates, committees and the amendment process. This government has chosen to open the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and two others. I thought, originally and mistakenly, that during committee I could bring forward amendments to suggest ways to make this bill better—amendments to the WSIA, since it's being opened. Imagine my dismay when I clearly understood that only the sections of the WSIA being addressed by this Bill 109 are open to discussion. What a disappointment. We are opening the act, but we can't address what needs to be looked at—only what the government has preapproved. Most of my amendments—based on consultations I have been having with lawyers, injured workers and compensation representatives across the province—will be ruled out of order, so I'll bring them up now.

The second part of my Bill 98 addressed the unfairness of persecuting a worker who is retired. Someone diagnosed in their retirement, according to the WSIA, is no longer considered to be earning, and therefore the way that compensation benefits are determined is affected. They are not eligible for loss of earnings benefits—benefits denied based on semantics. If it isn't loss of earnings, is it loss of retirement, loss of health, loss of ability, loss of time with grandkids? What, then, should they receive as compensation for their recognized suffering and occu-

pational disease? I proposed they should be calculated the same as they would have been if the worker was diagnosed while working—the day before or the day after retirement shouldn't qualify or disqualify someone from what they clearly deserve.

This government—in fact, this Minister of Labour—supported the spirit of my bill and claimed to support the intent of it. So when will we see that issue addressed? I'm not even allowed to introduce it as an amendment because it is section 43, not section 48. Perhaps this government will bring forward a whole bill of nothing but targeted and necessary changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act—perhaps.

0930

A worthwhile place for the Ministry of Labour to start is with Injured Workers' Consultants lawyer John McKinnon's paper entitled Age-Based Discrimination in Ontario's Workers' Compensation Laws. A number of age-based criteria have been included in compensation legislation since 1990. I will read a brief outline of the paper as explained by McKinnon:

"The concerns about age-based discrimination arise from these five areas: age-based limitation of compensation for wage losses, age-based limitation of the employer's obligation to re-employ after injury, age-based limitation of loss-of-retirement income benefits, age-based reduction of non-economic loss benefits, and age-based reduction of pension supplements for pre-1990 injuries by Old Age Security benefits."

Mr. Speaker, there is much to do. That list is just the beginning, so let's actually tackle this in a purposeful way, not in a way that is superficial, that they can point to, but in a way that will make a difference to injured workers and their families.

Mixing all of these bills together is totally unnecessary; it's counterproductive. I ask the government to listen to our concerns and separate these three schedules into the individual bills that they should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened to the thoughtful comments from the member from Oshawa. To put this in a bit of perspective, I can remember the day when, in most MPPs' offices, all they did—their primary work—was dealing with WSIB issues. Each MPP would have hundreds and hundreds, sometimes thousands, of ongoing files they had to deal with that weren't resolved; 90% of the work of MPPs was dealing with WSIB.

Now the WSIB is certainly much more invested in. There's a lot more staff, expertise and support. It's never going to be perfect because it deals with millions of workers on a daily basis. The complications of dealing with the issues of the employers and the issues of these workers is not an easy thing to do. I just don't want to let people think that this insurance system for people who get injured is all bad. It is far from perfect, because it's an open system that anybody can go to. It is not easy work for the thousands of men and women who work there. But it is something that is working. Again, like in

any other situation in a democracy, nothing ever works to perfection, but at least they do work very hard at trying to help workers.

In this legislation we're trying to improve some of these aspects, like survivor benefits. We're trying to do something about double-hatters. I find it ironic that the members are saying, "Well, there's too much in this bill; it's an omnibus bill," and then they suggest putting other things into it.

It is a good bill that has some very effective changes that other members have asked for, like the double-hatters, where we've gone on for 10 years. It's another way of just improving things, to make things better for workers in this province. That's why I support this bill, and I urge the members not to try and have it both ways. Let's get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the conversation around Bill 109 and compliment the member from Oshawa on her comments.

But first I feel it's important to put on the record that I'd like to recognize my colleague, the party's critic for labour, Ted Arnott, for his numerous attempts in the past to get this going forward in terms of recognizing the fairness around our firefighters. If we have a professional firefighter who wants to volunteer with his home department in his home community, he should be able to without repercussions. The whole issue of double-hatters has to be put to rest. I really commend Ted Arnott, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, for driving this for a number of years. Finally, we're seeing some movement in that regard. I think he deserves to be congratulated for his determination to keep this going, as well.

The other thing, Speaker, that we need to recognize is that we do need to grow the economy and create new, good-paying jobs in Ontario. We absolutely need to strengthen Ontarians' competitiveness so that we are no longer the most indebted subnational on this continent. The once economic engine of Canada being the most indebted subnational in North America is absolutely a travesty, and it's certainly an area where this government must do better.

In the spirit of doing better, we also have to reflect on the fact that this government is choosing to shut down democracy. It's not right that, in committee, our colleagues are having to give up their time to allow people who have made the effort to come to downtown Toronto to share their message. It's not right that they're shutting down debate, that they're shutting down people's voices. I hope they change their tune in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents from Windsor West and add, in this case, my two minutes' worth to the debate.

I think the member from Oshawa really touched on some very key points with Bill 109, specifically a private member's bill that she brought forward, Bill 98. It does

so much more when we are looking at the firefighters, providing them with the benefits that they need and providing the survivor benefits that their families deserve. Through Bill 98, those survivor benefits are retroactive. Bill 109 doesn't do that. There is no provision for that. We need to acknowledge that, often, the illnesses that present themselves are later in life, after somebody has retired. We need to make sure that there are provisions to take care of them post-retirement and take care of their families once, unfortunately, those workers have passed on.

Another really key issue that the member from Oshawa touched on is really opening up the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act—truly opening it up; not just pulling out bits and pieces that the government wants to look at, but truly opening it up and taking a serious look at the problems. I think everybody in this room, whether the other side wants to admit it or not, and probably everybody out in the public knows that there are serious problems with WSIB. When people go to claim WSIB, there's a history of people being denied, just for the sake of being denied. We need to make sure that there are some real, solid provisions in place for those people who go to work every day, give it their all, get hurt and then are denied benefits. We need to make sure that they're taken care of for the work that they do.

I hope that, in the future, the government will look at actually opening up the act so that we can make some good, serious changes to that act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm happy to respond for a couple of minutes on this. Essentially, what this bill is about is bringing fairness across the board to the first responders and other workers who have been referenced in the debate.

In particular, I just want to comment on how it affects the firefighters. The amendments that we are proposing, if passed, would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act. It'll provide additional tools to resolve disputes and reduce the need to seek remedies through the court system.

I did want to say something very briefly about the WSIA, because there are four key provisions in that that I think are worth noting.

The first provision is going to ensure that all workers know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim. You'd be surprised at the number of workers who don't, particularly in our minority population groups.

Secondly, it will make sure that workers have enhanced protections by incenting employers to operate safe sites, because it increases the penalties and so on on employers not in compliance.

Third, it brings a greater sense of fairness and fair play to the survivors in the case of a work-related death. It will ensure that they don't have to go through the onerous steps that they've had to go through in the past.

Finally, the amendments to the WSIB will ensure that the Fair Practices Commission is in legislation. The Fair

Practices Commission is an independent body that referees issues.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much, Minister.

Back to the member from Oshawa for final comments.
0940

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would like to acknowledge and appreciate those who made comments on my comments.

To the member from Eglinton—Lawrence: You brought up the history of the WSIB and that there are injured workers who are part of this system; and also the staff and that there are many people who are working hard to work within this system. As you said, it's not an easy thing to do, but it is the right thing to do. To take that one step further, the right thing to do would be to really delve into this act, take the opportunity and look at it and see where it could be strengthened and where it could be made better. I don't think anyone in this room argues that there are improvements to be made. It would be worth the time, really looking to make sure that that can be done properly.

To the member from Huron—Bruce, and hearing the history of the work done on behalf of the firefighters—we, as a caucus, support all of that and are glad to see these provisions come forward in this bill. Again, it begs the question: Why isn't there a firefighters' bill, with all of the pieces together in one, that we can all celebrate and move through? It's layered with these other pieces here today and the poison pill that is the opposite to what we are hoping to accomplish.

We're looking at making it more fair. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs had mentioned fairness and fair play for workers. Well, then we have schedule 2 that takes away the democratic right to vote for who will represent you in the event of a merger. Just slip it in there—surprise. That is not democratic. It is not what we stand for, and it is problematic. To talk about fairness and fair play in that larger picture, but then to put that little nugget in there—that's sneaky.

Again to the point made by my colleague from Windsor West that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and the other acts—if we want to make a difference, let's truly open them up and make that difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I too am pleased to rise this morning to add my comments to Bill 109. As we heard, this bill, if passed, would amend three separate acts affecting workers, to increase fairness and efficiency. The changes under this bill would, if they become law, provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario.

This would be done by providing more tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector; ensuring that broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible; and helping to provide a fair, just and efficient workers' compensation system. This would strengthen the protection for

workers while supporting business in trying to achieve that balance.

I want to concentrate on the changes that are proposed under the WSIA, for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. These amendments, if passed, would do mainly four things, and I know that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs touched upon those.

The first would be to ensure that workers know it is their right to file a WSIB claim, and that this right will be protected. If passed, this bill would prohibit an employer from taking any action against the worker with the intent of discouraging the worker from filing a claim or influencing the worker to withdraw or abandon a claim.

This happens, unfortunately. In my constituency of office, I will see, for example, newcomers to Canada. They don't know all of the laws and don't know their rights. So it is important for them to know not only that they have a right to file a claim—and that the employer has no right to try to influence them in any way—but it is their right to do so.

Secondly, this bill proposes an increase in maximum corporate penalties for convictions of an offence under this act. The penalties would increase from \$10,000, where they are now, to \$500,000. I think this is right, because we have to make sure that, again, workers are protected.

It would also provide greater fairness for survivors in cases of work-related death. Bill 109 would enable the WSIB to calculate the survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker engaged in the same profession as that out of which the deceased worker's injury arose. This is important for how the WSIB calculates survivor benefits for a worker who unfortunately dies of an occupational disease, who had no or low earnings on the date of the diagnosis because they were retired.

At the moment, when a worker passes away from an occupational disease and has no earnings at the time of diagnosis, the board's practice is to calculate the survivor benefits based on the annual average earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade. Bill 109, if passed, would enable the board to continue this practice and enshrine it in legislation. It would also be retroactive. It would apply to survivor benefits that were payable as of January 1, 1998, which was the date when the WSIA came into effect.

Most importantly, it would enshrine the Fair Practices Commission in legislation. The Fair Practices Commission, I want everyone at home to know, is an independent, neutral, confidential resource for injured workers, employers and service providers, and it is free of charge. These services include looking into individual complaints, tracking complaint trends, identifying system-wide issues and recommending improvements to the WSIB. This is very important for people who get hurt at work.

I know that the member from Oshawa was talking about opening the act. There could be a good idea for any act, but rewriting a whole act could take a year and a half or two years. In the meantime, we're approaching,

through Bill 109, some changes that need to be done immediately. It's not that there's not always more work to do; there is, but we're trying to really address things that can be done right now.

Mr. Speaker, during the second reading debate of this bill, we've heard opposition members express their support for this important legislation. For example, I know that the member from Niagara Falls said, "When I brought this bill to the local firefighters, they said they were happy with the language that was in it. So I can say I am also happy to know that they will receive the protection afforded to them and other workers under the Labour Relations Act."

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, "I want to talk about the double-hatter issue. This is what I want to commend the government on. I think they've done something very positive."

The member from Essex said, "The Fair Practices Commissioner, as an ombudsman of the WSIB—I welcome that type of role, somebody who can come in and actually assess whether the practices under the WSIB are being effectively and fairly implemented." I agree with that.

Also, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said, "This bill is another good example of a couple of pieces of good legislation which we support."

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government introduced this bill back in May. We allowed debate to continue, when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill, so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views on the bill. This bill has now seen over 10 hours of debate. According to my modest count, I think about 60 MPPs have spoken on the bill. So there has been considerable debate on this bill, and we have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives. I believe it is time that this bill is put to a vote for second reading and, hopefully, be referred to committee, where the important work takes place, as we know. In committee, members of all parties will hear from stakeholders who have an interest in this bill. Members of the public will be able to provide their important input on this bill.

There are a number of pieces of important legislation that have already been introduced that we would like to debate and we would like to move through, because we're here to make a difference for our constituents and we're here to make changes that are needed immediately.

Let me give you some examples of bills that we need to discuss and that are important:

- Bill 119, Health Information Protection Act;
- Bill 122, Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act;
- Bill 132, Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act;
- Bill 135, Energy Statute Law Amendment Act;
- Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails Act.

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These are all important bills that our constituents expect changes to be coming forward on. So we would

like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before this House. We also need to refer Bill 106 to committee for further review so we can go on with other debate. As a result—

Mr. Steve Clark: Don't do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, I kindly move that this question be put now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mrs. Albanese has moved that the question now be put.

We have had seven days, approximately 10 hours, of debate on this particular bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Thank you very much.

I am satisfied that there has in fact been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Et tu, Speaker? Et tu?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Et tu, Brute?

It is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question now be put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Since we had sufficient people standing, there will be a deferred vote after question period this morning.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

**ENDING COAL
FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015
SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON
POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE**

Mr. Murray moved third reading of the following bill: Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Murray has moved third reading of Bill 9. Back to the minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is a much-debated bill, but I think it makes a lot of sense. There is some legacy here across governments. We're very proud as a government to have phased out coal across Ontario, the largest greenhouse gas emissions reduction in the history of North America. It goes back, and there is some shared legacy here. As we remember, the member for Waterloo,

Ms. Witmer, I think it was back in 2002, took actions toward the first coal closure, which was in Mississauga. It was interesting because she said at the time that it would probably lead to increased prices for energy. She was quite articulate about balancing those kinds of things, but the cost to Ontarians of keeping these things open was much more significant and much more severe, Mr. Speaker.

There has been a lot of debate on this in the earlier readings of the bill, so I don't want to belabour the point, but one of the things that I find quite interesting is that I've had a few people say, "Why is the government bringing forward a bill to close coal plants and to make it a law that you can't open them?"

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: That's a really good question.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a very good question.

One of the biggest challenges with climate change is coal. You may know that in 2011 the government of Germany—Ms. Merkel, who I have an amazing amount of respect for on the international issues of Syria and immigration; she is an incredibly principled leader of great integrity. Her government, however, decided in 2011 to shutter all 17 nuclear plants. You can imagine what would happen to our energy profile in Ontario if we made the decision, as Germany did or as Japan did or as other jurisdictions did, to close all our nuclear plants. The member from Oxford I think sincerely asked, "Why would you put this in law?"

If Germany, after it had started to phase out coal, had actually made a decision that it was going to keep carbon-intensive industries out of the rule—they would not be able to do this, right? It would certainly be a good debate. It's interesting right now because the amount of coal production in Germany is huge. They are becoming more and more reliant on coal. We have a 15% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, Mr. Speaker; Germany is at 40%. For the member from Oxford, it creates some challenges if you've committed to a 40% reduction in GHG emissions and you close 11 nuclear plants, and then coal becomes the default replacement.

The same thing happened in Japan. You see coal plant closures now expanding in places like Turkey and Brazil. What it means is that some of those countries like Germany are continuing to meet their GHG emission targets but it's coming at a huge cost.

The other thing that's happening in some of these countries that have actually brought coal back online is that they've lost investor confidence. We just did our IPO with Hydro One for the 15%, and we got good value out of that. Do you know that over 53% of investors in energy in Germany right now have frozen their investments because of the controversies around coal production? Germany is also dealing with huge health issues from late-night-generated coal.

Japan: It's understandable, because Japan has a short-term solution. The Fukushima disaster, for which I know we all have great empathy and pray for the folks in Japan who lost lives, was a huge tragedy. We know the vulnerability and the dangers that go with energy are very real,

so I don't think this is to be taken lightly. We are in a jurisdiction right now where we have good geology and we don't have some of the vulnerabilities that some of those places do, but it is not an exceptional situation to see countries reverse themselves and open up coal.

When we are voting as a Legislature, whether we are talking about the work that someone like Elizabeth Witmer did or Jim Bradley, Dalton McGuinty and many other folks in this House from many parties who worked very hard to make these very difficult decisions to get us to a carbon-neutral economy—the implications of the level of carbon dioxide at 400 parts per million right now in our atmosphere won't be felt for another 50 or 60 years. We just have to look at what's happening right now. It is estimated by scientists that the major drought events going on in the world are two to three times more likely to be happening because of the level of carbon dioxide that was in the atmosphere 50 or 60 years ago.

California produces 90% or more of our strawberries and broccoli, most of our basic vegetables, and 35% of all of our food in North America. California is now in five years of an extreme drought. There is no other place in the world on which Ontarians, outside our own borders, are more reliant for food. That's affordable food for families. It jumped about 20% last year, our imported food. We know that the level of five years of extreme drought—and NASA now projecting and saying, as has the Pentagon, that these are climate-related events.

We know the situation in Syria. It was preceded, from 2005 to 2011, by probably the worst drought in human history. It is estimated that Syria lost, prior to 2011, 60% to 80% of its food production. Over 800,000 farmers lost their farms, and about two million people—one of the largest domestic migrations in human history within a country—migrated into the large cities. At the same time, one million refugees were coming from the Iraq war. That created a destabilized situation. The country lost its food production; it was losing its water supply because of a drought. That drought began, again, in 2013.

You can't say all of these things are direct A to B climate change-related, but as the folks at the NASA Goddard centre and the United Kingdom academy of sciences have said, the possibility of that extreme level of drought that would force agricultural collapse and the loss of a rural middle class is not very likely without the changed conditions on this planet.

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As the Pentagon said, climate change is now destabilizing regions like Sudan because it's creating food and water crises that, in countries that already don't have enough capacity and already have problems with famine, create conflicts and are catalysts and accelerators of conflict.

On a global scale, as we lead up to Paris, we're going to go in there very, very proud—I don't just mean our Liberal government; I hope all members of the Legislature—that we have closed coal plants and we are committing to keeping them closed. That puts us not just in the minority of jurisdictions that have phased out coal,

but we're one of the jurisdictions that is committing—unlike other major players in the world, like Japan and Germany and some of the emerging economies—to keep them closed. If we think this is a light commitment that we're making, Speaker, it's not. It's a commitment that many of the world's most successful and largest and most powerful economies have not been able to keep.

In the spirit of non-partisanship and our planet and our children, I'm hoping we will not only vote for this, but will vote for it with great pride, because this is a legacy of all members of this Legislature. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and God bless.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the third reading of Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act. I appreciated the comments that the Minister of the Environment shared just prior to me standing. I appreciate the fact that he recognized the work that Elizabeth Witmer did, but I'd also like to recognize the work of my colleague the member from Simcoe—Grey. When he was Minister of Energy, he actually signed the order to close Lakeview, so I wanted to give him his due recognition as well.

It's important that we do recognize the legacy of effort that has culminated in improving the environment in Ontario, Speaker. Again, it's important that people understand that Elizabeth Witmer was a champion. She held her seat in 1990 until recently, in 2012. This remarkable woman, who has a connection to my riding of Huron—Bruce, was an absolute dynamo and a wonderful representative at Queen's Park of her constituents of Kitchener—Waterloo, as well as of the entire PC Party during her tenure here at Queen's Park. I really think it's important that we recognize that it was her efforts in 2001, when she was the Minister of the Environment, that formulated the plan to end the use of coal at the Lakeview Generating Station in Mississauga.

I think it's important to recognize that we want legacies to be respected. To that end, during committee, my party, the PC Party of Ontario, brought forth an amendment asking that Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, be named in recognition of Ms. Witmer's work in ending coal-fired power generation. Unfortunately, the Liberals decided to vote that particular amendment down. So while I appreciate the platitudes that have been offered to Ms. Witmer from the opposite side of the House here today, I really wish they would have given her due recognition and paid tribute to her legacy by renaming Bill 109.

Let's take a look at the important initiatives the PC Party of Ontario has long been involved with in terms of advocating to protect our environment.

Speaker, it was back in 1972, under the premiership of Bill Davis, that the Ministry of the Environment was actually created. It was two years later, in 1974, during that throne speech, that the same Progressive Conservative government announced it was bringing in a new Environmental Assessment Act. This meant that for the

first time, there would be a formal way to review the impact of new proposals on our land and water. In 1975, I'm very pleased to say, it was the PC government that made it law.

Following this wonderful tradition of environmental consciousness, we in the PC Party do support ending the use of coal-fired power generation and we recognize the benefits that this action provides to our province.

I do want to take a moment, though, during this third reading to recognize a number of organizations who took the time to raise their voice and share comments on this action. In fact, it was in June of this year that the International Institute for Sustainable Development published a report on Ontario's coal phase-out. It is in this report that they recognized that health concerns of course was one of the greatest driving factors influencing Ontario's policies regarding coal.

But I do want to share something that we can't overlook. In that report, they recognized that Ross McKittrick had his own study that recognized that coal phase-out would lead to extremely small improvements in air quality because we need to recognize that we in Ontario are also impacted by the use of coal in the States, in terms of prevailing winds. It's not just the coal plants in Ontario, but outside influences that affect our air quality as well.

There was a conference in 2007—The Future of Coal in Ontario? Towards a Clean, Secure and Competitive Energy Portfolio—that argued that air pollution in Ontario was mainly caused by our friends south of the border. Even at that point, Ontario Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller "testified to a steady improvement in air quality in Ontario during and after the phase-out." During that testimony, he noted that "while reports clearly show improvement, we can't specifically attribute this to the Ontario coal phase-out" because we're glad to say that the US is taking strides in that regard as well.

So in Ontario, we're unique. We phased out our own coal plants. We recognize the fact that we are impacted by prevailing winds bringing attributes of coal use into our province, but we recognize as well that our friends in the States are reconsidering their use of coal in terms of new innovation and new technology, and using technology that will limit the emissions from coal use.

When we talk about new innovation and new technologies, I can't help but think of cap and trade, because we need to ensure that, as Ontario moves forward to limit greenhouse gas emissions, we need to be using tools. We need to be setting regulations and legislation that lead to allowing technology, innovation and ultimately industry to impact how they can continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We can't tie their hands with unnecessary legislation and heavy-handed legislation. We need to make sure that the tools are in place to enable industry to continue to work towards cleaner air in Ontario.

I worry a little bit, because if we rush too much with cap and trade in our efforts to minimize greenhouse gas emissions, we could very well end up with legislation that is ill-advised, with a lack of consultation. It brings up neonicotinoids. It brings up the Great Lakes Protection Act.

There has been so much in recent history where this government has chosen to totally ignore voices of concern over their regulations and over legislation that they've introduced. I have to say that we need to be very careful and diligent in holding this government to account when it comes to implementing one of the most impactful pieces of legislation and vision in terms of cap and trade.

Stakeholders and industry representatives have been asking for details this past week, during our constit week. There has been outreach. There were one-on-one meetings, and there were telephone town halls, if you will, where a few more layers have been put onto the cap-and-trade vision that this government is looking to implement.

But I know there's still concern in the aggressive approach that this government is taking. They're looking to really go forward in 2017, probably with an increase in fuel, but we'll see. They said right from the outset a three-cent to a four-cent increase on fuel, and that's just based on what they've learned from Quebec at this stage of the game. But what happens after that? That three to four cents—industry is saying they want to see that particular money go into a dedicated coffer, if you will, as opposed to the black treasury hole. They want to see that initial money go into making sure that a cap-and-trade market is adequately funded, and innovation ultimately is driven from that.

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It's interesting, as we reflect on the amount of time that this government wants to place on Bill 9. Speaker, if you were to look at this bill, it's two pages. Why are we spending so much time on something that clearly did not need legislation because it was happening anyway, when there are so many other important issues that should be discussed?

It's mind-boggling how, time and time again, this government is time-allocating bills, limiting debate, limiting voices on very important issues that really deserve a lot of thought, a lot of self-reflection and a lot of input from our stakeholders, to make sure that we're getting it right. We all know what happens when you rush legislation and you cut off voices from the consultation table. We end up with an ill-conceived approach to managing neomics. We end up with a Green Energy Act that stripped away local autonomy.

But some would say that was maybe the intent of limiting voice. They did not want communities having a say in whether they wanted to host renewable energy projects to the extent that this government has penetrated Ontario. It just goes to show that this government, I would dare say and argue, does not want to open up democracy, because it's their way or the highway. I'm very concerned about that.

Again, this bill, Bill 9: We have spent a lot of time on it. It is a mere two pages. Here we are in the House, dedicating more time in third reading to say, "Yes, this is a good initiative." But for goodness' sakes, let me use this platform while we discuss Bill 9 to ask this government respectfully to be mindful of the other pieces of legis-

lation that need to come forward in this House and be mindful of the fact that voices need to be raised in order to make sure it works for Ontario and stakeholders and taxpayers. We need to open up debate. We need to allow people across this province an avenue to share their ideas, their support or their concerns.

As it was said earlier today in debating Bill 109, this government is not allowing committees to go across the province like it once did. They're making everybody come in to Toronto. They're limiting their deputations to mere minutes, to the point where our party and the third party are giving up of their time of questioning just to give these people, who want to have their voices heard, a chance to deliver their entire message. There's something wrong with this picture.

I truly hope that, going forward, we can celebrate the closing of coal plants across Ontario. But for goodness' sakes, in the spirit of legacy that the Minister of the Environment talked about, let's make sure that we do better from here on in. In terms of legacy, let's make sure that collectively, in that non-partisan spirit he referred to, we join together and say that coming down the pipeline, all future legislation deserves to be debated properly. We should not be time-allocating it. We should be making sure we can travel across this province to allow people—who have great ideas, who may have concerns—a chance to elevate their voice, because not everyone can make the effort to come in to Toronto to speak to a committee for a mere five minutes or so. It just doesn't make any sense. I would suggest that there is incredible room for improvement, on the government side of doing business, in that regard.

It makes one wonder, coming back to Bill 9, if this is just another photo op. These folks are doing everything they can to minimize debate but get out there for the big photo op. It's kind of rich, in the sense that people are seeing through it. They're concerned. People are seeing through all the facade of doing better for Ontario, because quite frankly, they're calling the government out now, and that's good news. They're calling the government out on the sale of Hydro One, and they're worried about cap and trade. It's going to be an interesting time.

I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. There will be time available for you, if you need more, at a later date and time.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely my pleasure to introduce MaryLynn West-Moynes, CEO and president of Georgian College, and especially the campus in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome George Kemp, the chair of the board of governors of Northern College and a constituent of my riding, and Fred Gibbons, the president of Northern College.

Ms. Soo Wong: I believe we have a guest from my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. Page Aislin Perry's grandmother Isabel Hutchison is here today. Welcome to Queen's Park. I believe she's sitting in the public gallery.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce Mr. George Burton, the president of Canadore College in North Bay, and Mr. Bill Ferguson, the chair of the board of governors.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce Mrs. Jane Meadus. She's a lawyer at the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. Next to her is Tamara Daly of York University. She is a long-term-care researcher and holds the Canadian Institutes of Health Research research chair in gender, work and health. Welcome to Queen's Park, ladies.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's my great honour to welcome members of the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario who are visiting Queen's Park for their annual meeting, which is taking place today in room 228 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. I welcome all members to drop in.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would like to welcome teachers who are here with us for a few days this week for the teachers' forum—and I think by that look, I just trumped you; sorry, Speaker.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park the grade five class from St. Paul Catholic Elementary School from the riding of Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome the representatives here today from Union Gas and Enbridge at their annual day here at Queen's Park. There's a reception tonight in the Queen's Park dining room.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today an exciting new president of St. Clair College in Windsor, Patti France.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to welcome a number of guests from my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East. We have some members of page Hannah Dossa's family here—I understand Hannah is the page captain today—her parents, Farid and Dinar Dossa; her maternal grandparents, Ashraf and Parviz Parpia; her paternal grandparents, Nazin and Yasmin Dossa; and her great-aunt Zarina Esmail. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome my good friend, the president of Niagara College, Dan Patterson.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would also like to welcome Dan Patterson, but I would also like to welcome—and I'm just choosing one of the people here from the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario—Gracia Janes, who is a strong defender of farmland in the province of Ontario and agriculture in the Niagara region.

Hon. David Zimmer: From Seneca College, I would like to welcome the board chair, Donna Duncan, and the president, David Agnew.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Glenn Vollebregt, the president of St. Lawrence College in Kingston and the Islands. Welcome.

Mr. Han Dong: On behalf of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I would like to welcome all the members from Colleges Ontario. It's their Queen's Park day, and I just met a few of them. I encourage all members of this House to have a very fruitful meeting with them today.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'd like to introduce the president of Sault College: Dr. Ron Common is with us today in the public west gallery.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce family members of page Michelle Lewis, who are visiting from my riding of Davenport: mother, Nicole Knowlton; father, Shaun Lewis; and proud grandmother Joanne Lewis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to salute and welcome the president of the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario, Mary Potter—and also a good friend of mine and a constituent of our House leader: Beverley McIntosh, who I had the pleasure of working with for several years.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome here today the students of St. Josephine Bakhita elementary school, from Ajax, Ontario. They will be visiting with us very shortly.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to welcome MaryLynn West-Moynes and Tom McBride from Georgian College in my riding.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I also have a teacher who is here today. His name is Ravi Vethamany. He's a teacher at Cecil Facer, up in my riding of Nickel Belt. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to welcome Cheryl Jensen in the west gallery. She is the president of Algonquin College in Ottawa, one of the most progressive and successful colleges in the province.

Hon. David Zimmer: Our page captain today is Taylor Dallin, and in the gallery today is her mother, Gloria Yoon; her father, Eric Dallin; and her brother Logan Dallin.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome students from All Saints Catholic Elementary School, who I just visited with and are joining us in the gallery shortly, and the teachers who are with them: Natalie Makhlof, Kristen Baker, Jeanette McDonald and Lisa Ferrarelli. Thank you for visiting Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know my friend John Vanthof introduced Fred Gibbons, who is here from Northern, but David Agnew is here from Seneca as well, and I'd like to acknowledge his presence.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome Maureen Piercy, president of Loyalist College, and Tony Tilly, president of Fleming College. I had the opportunity to meet with them this morning. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Along with our college educators, we have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, 25 teachers from across the province

participating in the fourth annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teacher's Forum. Please join me in warmly welcoming some of our province's educators to the Legislature today. Thank you for being with us.

I'm sure the college presidents, teachers and students who are here are going to enjoy question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will do my best to behave; I'm sorry.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we do that, I would like to have you meet our new pages: from York Centre, Megan Faith Ally; from Vaughan, Alex Bancea; from Parkdale—High Park, Ross Cameron; from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Keana Cavero; from Willowdale, Taylor Dallin; from Pickering—Scarborough East, Hannah Dossa; from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Benjamin Huckabee; from Mississauga—Streetsville, Oluwadayomi Kehinde; from Northumberland—Quinte West, Lauren Kinsey; from Etobicoke Centre, Aminah Kirefu; from Davenport, Michelle Lewis; from Windsor West, Prasanna Mohile; from Mississauga—Brampton South, Ajay Narayan; Scarborough—Agincourt, Aislin Perry; from Welland, Benjamin Shoalts; from Oak Ridges—Markham, Aaron Suthakar; Oakville, Brooke Westwater; from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Rachael Young; unable to be with us today in the introductions, from Eglinton—Lawrence, Jack Farley; and from St. Paul's, Noam Lasry.

These are your pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for question period.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: I'm going to try again today. The question is not about infrastructure. The question is not about valuation. The question is not about 2002 or previous governments or past Premiers. The question is not about leveraging assets. The question isn't about restructuring the old Ontario Hydro. The question is not about the 407.

My question is sincere. My question is simple. Mr. Speaker, yes or no, does the Premier think paying the Hydro One CEO \$4 million is appropriate? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will start right off the bat.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just begin by commenting that the median salary for CEOs of American energy companies was over \$7 million last year. That's the median salary for American energy companies. I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that a large part of that compensation package for the CEO of Hydro One will be dependent on, will be at risk if the company doesn't improve, if there isn't better customer service, if there isn't better health and safety for workers. He knows that those factors are in place.

But the whole discussion about Hydro One, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition has said, is about investment in infrastructure. That's what it's about. That's why we are making these changes: so that we can invest in the infrastructure that we need in the 21st century.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Rather than comparing to corporate America, compare to other provinces. Hydro-Québec: \$400,000, compared to your \$4-million payout.

Regardless of the mess this government has made of the personal support worker wage increase, I can tell you a PSW can make a little over \$30,000 a year. Notwithstanding the cuts across the province to special education, we know educational assistants make around \$35,000 a year. And despite the fact the government has cut hundreds of nurses across Ontario, a new nurse will make over \$50,000 a year. Yet knowing all of this, the government still thinks it's appropriate to pay \$24 million a year for just the top four paid executives at Hydro One.

Knowing all this information, knowing all the cuts you've done to front-line services, how can you find this appropriate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, let's just—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm asking everyone. This will be the last time I interrupt to ask. I will then move to warnings.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The question from the Leader of the Opposition and the heckling from the leader of the third party would lead one to believe that they actually supported our increases to personal support workers' salaries and development support workers and ECEs. They didn't support them; they didn't support those increases. So it's a bit rich, coming from the two of them, to attack us about our support for those workers.

Mr. Speaker, broadening the ownership of Hydro One is about investing in infrastructure that, in fact, will provide opportunity for the very people that the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party seem to be worried about. Making sure that we have companies in this province that can move their goods and their people around, making sure that the quality of life for people who depend on transit is improved: That's what these investments are about. It's why we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Single parents are working two jobs and barely staying afloat. Some of our school support staff are clearing \$40,000 a year. The average truck driver makes somewhere between \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year. Corrections officers are making \$55,000 a year, and often in unsafe conditions.

I've asked over and over again, and the government has been disingenuous and seems to just not care. I will give them one more shot. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: Give me one reason why it's appropriate to pay the Hydro One CEO \$4 million a year. It is not even close to anywhere to what other hydro CEOs are making anywhere else in Canada—one reason.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Control your anger now, when you answer this question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who's next?

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we ran on and are implementing a plan that is based on investment in the people of this province. I will tell you, having travelled to California and China, that I am even more convinced that our advantage in Ontario is our people, making sure that they have the education and skills that they need for the 21st century. They are our advantage.

But in order for those people to be at their best, we need, as a government, to make the investments that will allow them to thrive, whether that's in our education system, our colleges and universities—funding for those institutions has been going up and continues to go up—or whether it is the investment in infrastructure that we absolutely need in order to be able to compete.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Stormont is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's the plan that we have put in place. That's the plan that we're implementing. It is a plan that is comprehensive. So, the Leader of the Opposition has taken one piece. He doesn't, for reasons unknown to us, like the idea of improving Hydro One. We think that it should—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville is warned.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: The government can't have it both ways. The Deputy Premier routinely shouts about the 1% when we question the government's

cuts to physician services. But the front bench over there is the first to defend the outrageous salary of Hydro One's CEO, one that is almost 40 times that of a new doctor.

Further to that, the Financial Accountability Officer's report has said that the government hopes that "measures to reduce physician fees" will help them reach their targets. They have already cut the portion of health care three times in the last year.

Mr. Speaker, how many more times will the government slash physicians' service fees, and when can doctors expect the next cut?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So now we're going to talk about some of the people in the province who earn the most money, and that they should earn more? That's now where we're going? The inconsistency that continues to come from the opposite side is quite remarkable.

What we're defending as a government in our plan is the right of the people of Ontario to have excellent institutions in their education and their health care system, to have the investments in infrastructure—whether it's roads, bridges, transit or water systems—that they need in order to be able to compete, to have a government that is going to work with businesses to allow them to flourish and become exporters, to open doors around the world, and to allow them to expand and to compete globally.

That's what we're defending, Mr. Speaker. That's the plan we're implementing, and I'm sorry that the Leader of the Opposition is so inconsistent that he can't either see that or understand that we have to do all of those things.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: You want to talk about consistency? A \$4-million salary for a Hydro One CEO is appropriate, but a family doctor making one fortieth of the salary isn't appropriate? Give me a break.

Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, I was visiting Windsor and I went to the Windsor Regional Hospital. There I met just a handful of the 800,000 Ontarians without a family doctor.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Trinity—Spadina is warned.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I heard from family doctors like Dr. Jen Bondy, who just made it under the wire, before your cuts, to join her family health team. Many of her fellow new physicians have described the medical profession as having morale at an all-time low. They feel that the Liberals have launched a systematic attack on doctors. Many are threatening to leave Ontario because of these cuts to the system.

Mr. Speaker, how can this government justify the cuts to health care? Give us the justification for these cuts.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that I think it's important for Ontarians to know.

One of them is that we have increased the physician services budget. Roughly 10 cents out of every dollar this government spends in the province goes to physician services, those hard-working front-line workers. We've increased that by 1.25% last year, this year by the same amount, next year by the same amount again.

We've asked our physicians to accept that modest increase in the overall budget. It will mean some challenges in terms of us having to make sure that we stay within that budget, but it is so that we can provide those increases to our PSWs across the province; so we can invest more in home and community care, as we are doing, \$250 million more this year; and so we can continue to invest more money in mental health and addictions. I believe that the majority of physicians across this province support a sustainable health care budget and investing in other priorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The only physician who supports the physician cuts is the Minister of Health. The Liberal government is gutting health care in Ontario. Governance and leadership are about making priorities. Your priorities, Premier, are \$2.5 billion for the Pan Am Games, \$24 million for overpaid execs at Hydro One and \$3.7 million to unions without a single receipt. Why is health care not a priority?

On my Windsor trip, I learned from Dr. Darren Cargill that the Windsor hospital that he works at doesn't even have a palliative care team. We have 800,000 Ontarians without a family doctor, yet this government just cut 50 residency spots. When will this government make health care a priority?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I think the leader of the official opposition already knows that health care is a top priority of this government: \$50 billion invested in that. We're proud of all our health care workers, more than a quarter of a million of them around this province.

It's simply not true that we're changing our investments or our commitments to doctors across the province. We put 70 separate savings opportunities in front of the OMA over the course of a year of negotiations. We did not receive a single piece of advice or reply from the OMA on a single one of them. We had an independent umpire, retired Justice Warren Winkler, come forward and implore the OMA to accept the government's fair offer at that time last fall. The OMA rejected that fair offer.

Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly indicated to the OMA that we're prepared to negotiate with them, to sit down and have discussions. To date, the OMA has refused to continue those discussions. We implore them to do that.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last week, Ed Clark told a business crowd at a \$1,000-a-plate luncheon that he wants to open our health

care system to the private sector. When did the Premier give Ed Clark the mandate to open our health care system to US-style privatization?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give the leader of the third party another example of what Ed Clark was talking about, and that is the development of skills and experience here that we have in education and health. Those can be useful to the world.

On our trip to China, there was a group from a family health team right here in Toronto. That group was signing agreements in China with medical practitioners and students there to share information, to do some training on how we have organized family health teams in some of the practices here.

That's the kind of opportunity that we need to continue to look for because, quite frankly, the knowledge and expertise that's been developed here of course is good for Ontarians, but it can be good for the world, Mr. Speaker. That's what Ed Clark is talking about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, I asked the Premier about Ed Clark's new plan to link our health care system to the private sector. While the Premier chooses to fire nurses, close beds, and is now choosing to open the door to US-style private health care, I'm proud to actually defend public health care in Ontario.

Will the Premier make it clear to Ed Clark and make it clear to the 13 million Ontarians who rely on our public health care system that health care should be about families—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and not shareholders and profits?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm honestly not sure whether the leader of the third party understands what it is we're talking about, because she has decided on a piece of rhetoric that actually bears no resemblance to what it is we're talking about. I'm going to give her two more examples. When we were in China, TVO—TVOntario—and CBS Consulting Inc. of Markham, Ontario entered into an agreement to provide English-language high school courses to Chinese students. That's an investment of \$250,000, creating four jobs. Here's an example of educational expertise that has been developed here in Ontario that we can now leverage, and we can partner with people in another country to allow them to have access to that expertise. I will give another example in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Actually, Speaker, I would prefer that the Premier just answer my question in the final supplementary. Ontario has been a leader in medical research for decades.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everybody knows that, and we have shared that research with the world. I am proud of that, Speaker. Whether it's medication, whether it's surgical techniques, people around the world benefit every day from Ontario's leadership, and we have accomplished this within the framework of our public health care system. We should continue to share our research. We should continue to be a centre for innovation when it comes to health care, but I am proud to defend public health care in Ontario and I sure hope that this Liberal government is prepared to do the same.

And so I ask, will this Premier do the right thing and tell Ed Clark, unequivocally, that health care should be public and not private?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We defend publicly funded health care in Ontario. We stand for publicly funded health care in Ontario. But there are opportunities, and I will give the leader of the third party another example. SickKids hospital and the Children's Hospital of Fudan University in China have signed a memorandum of understanding. It's a multi-year partnership to support neonatology. It will provide advisory services to support the design, quality improvement and workflow of a new CHFU neonatal tower. It will provide the development of education and training programs for physicians, nurses and management, to be delivered in both China and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there's an opportunity that, within the framework of publicly funded health care, will provide opportunity, will save lives and will benefit both China and Ontario.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats believe in publicly funded and publicly delivered health care, and that's what we hope the Liberals are going to provide for Ontario.

My next question is to the Premier. Last week, the Minister of Finance told me that the Liberal government "will do everything necessary to maximize the potential of our assets." Does that include selling off even more of Ontario's revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party has, I presume, read our budget, read our platform, and understands what we are doing. She understands that Ed Clark has given us advice on leveraging Hydro One. She understands that we are committed to selling some real estate. She understands that we were committed to selling GM shares. She understands that that money is going into investments in transit across this province, in roads and bridges and infrastructure across this province. She knows full well that we have taken the advice of the assets group, that we are broadening the ownership of Hydro One. She knows that that's the plan. She knows we're going ahead and implementing it.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, the slogan for their last week of the campaign should have been "A vote for Wynne is a vote for Hudak."

Anyway, the Premier won't rule out selling more assets, and her ministers keep opening the door to more sell-offs. Her unelected banker is now talking about privatizing health care and post-secondary education.

Will the Premier stop listening to bankers, start listening to people and come clean about whether or not she is planning to sell off more of Ontario's revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that there are some points to be gained by sort of flip comments from the leader of the third party, but we're at a very serious juncture in this province. Our economy is in transition, and it's in transition because of global forces. It's not in transition because of anything that any individual company or politician has done in Ontario.

We are in transition because the nature of manufacturing is changing. We're in transition because we need modern, updated infrastructure. We're in transition because the world of technology has changed, and it has changed all over the world. If we don't keep up, if we don't make the investments that are needed at this juncture, we will fall behind. Despite the fact that we have a highly educated workforce, despite the fact that we have all the resources that we need, we will fall behind if we make the wrong decisions. The leader of the third party is counselling—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier knows exactly what she's doing. She could rule out selling off more of Ontario's revenue-generating assets. It would be easy to rule that out, but she will not do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead, the Premier and her ministers are offering Ontarians more doublespeak.

Why won't the Premier just be clear and transparent, as she so much indicated she was going to do from day one and hasn't done yet? Why will she not be transparent and open with Ontarians and tell them straight up, right here in this House, if she is going to be selling off more of Ontario's revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows full well that we are implementing the plan that we put forward in our budget. We are implementing that plan, and in that plan we said we were going to take the advice of the assets council. We have taken that advice. We are broadening the ownership of Hydro One. There's nothing else in the plan in terms of assets.

What I would say to the leader of the third party is that the openness we have brought to this process, by being clear that we are investing in infrastructure and that in order to do that, we needed the revenue, we needed the

funds in order to be able to do that—that's what we brought to the people of Ontario. That's the plan we're implementing. Because of that plan, there will be projects—there are projects—being built all over this province in rural, northern, southwestern, eastern and southern Ontario in order to make communities more viable, to make communities more attractive to businesses, and to allow us to thrive into the 21st century.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Not only is the minister continuing policies that will make hydro more expensive, but he is now centralizing power within his office. Bill 135 will effectively remove procurement and planning from the Independent Electricity System Operator and strip the Ontario Energy Board of its transmission approval authority. These bodies are supposed to be autonomous and above political manipulation. However, that all changes if Bill 135 becomes law.

My question is this: What have the IESO and the OEB done that the minister feels it is necessary to strip them of their authority, which will surely result in further unmitigated disasters and scandals in our electricity system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I always appreciate the bombast with which my critic provides questions. Sometimes it's important to actually look at the facts, for example.

The legislation has a process to empower the IESO to undertake competitive selection for procurement processes for electricity transmission projects when appropriate.

In terms of energy system planning, the legislation would enshrine the long-term energy planning process that was developed in 2010 and 2013 to ensure that future long-term plans are developed consistent with the principles of cost effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, and community and aboriginal engagement.

Particularly, in terms of transmission, the Independent Electricity System Operator would be authorized to plan and undertake competitive approaches for transmission selection and procurement. It gives power to the IESO in planning and procurement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's not what the industry says, Speaker. We've heard from expert and industry stakeholders who universally decry this undermining of the IESO and the OEB. They say this is no way to manage an energy system in the 21st century.

The smart meter program—done without the advice and expertise of the IESO—turned into yet another Liberal energy scandal, costing ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars more than was originally projected, and leaving homeowners with untrusted and unreliable devices.

Another example is the Niagara-Caledonia-Middleport transmission line, which the OEB said was unnecessary. Yet the government went ahead anyway, and now it sits unused, after costing the people of Ontario \$100 million.

Will the minister tell us who will protect generators, stakeholders and ratepayers from further Liberal disasters and scandals if Bill 135 becomes law?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing that he would even suggest that the IESO was not involved in inaugurating the smart meters. I happened to have been on the board of the IESO between 2007 and 2010. They in fact did all the software. They did all the work to create the smart meters. They did all the oversight in implementing smart meters. So I don't know where he gets off by saying the IESO had nothing to do with smart meters. They created the software; they created the program; they created all the oversight for implementation. So he'd better get his facts straight.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Since the Premier is selling off Hydro One, Hydro One profits will be going to the private sector, but the bills are still coming to the province, not Hydro One. Fifteen per cent of Hydro One's profits will go to Bay Street, but 100% of a \$3-million bill for IPO-related expenses will go straight to the province. That means Ontarians will pay the bill—not Hydro One, not its new private investors.

If this is such a great deal, why are Ontario families going to be stuck paying this bill?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One. We just finished the IPO. We just sourced \$3 billion as a result, to invest in other assets, into the Trillium Trust. We also had an additional billion dollars in special dividends just prior to the IPO, which, again, enables us to enhance the value of Hydro One and the benefit to the shareholders, 84% of which are Ontarians and the taxpayers. The broadening of ownership included—40%—retailers from Ontario.

The bottom line is, we have a company that's now valued more, is more efficient and has greater board governance and executive control. The company is outperforming than it has ever done before, and it will continue to provide a greater benefit to us as shareholders of the company that we still have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It didn't take long for the Premier to give in to her very powerful friends. They will get 15% of Hydro One's profit, and they'll pay 0% of this \$3-million bill.

This bill was for the period that ended September 30. The IPO didn't close until November 5, and the Premier is still planning to sell more. How much more will Ontario families be paying so that Bay Street investors don't have to pay a cent?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The value of Hydro One, and the shareholders—us, as owners of this company—has

now been determined at the high end. That's net of all these other expenses that the member is speaking of.

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We have just maintained and enabled this company to provide greater value, provide greater capital gains for the province that we're now able to reinvest to produce new assets at even greater returns.

The member opposite is making claims that are actually monies that have been awarded to ourselves. We are the ones benefitting from all of this at the end, not some other mythical operation.

The fact is, the net result of this IPO has enabled us to source \$3 billion more for other investments in the province while still retaining 86% ownership of the corporation.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Human rights are an essential staple in any democracy. Not only my constituents in Kingston and the Islands but all of Ontario should be proud of the leadership this province has—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who, please?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Oh, sorry. It's for the Attorney General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Sometimes I feel as though excellent leadership goes unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the Attorney General enlighten this House on how this government has ensured that human rights are preserved for every Ontarian?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I want to thank the MPP for Kingston and the Islands for her very important question. I also agree that the defence of human rights is an essential part of our community. All Ontarians have the right to live free of discrimination, inequality and intolerance. The protection of human rights is a fundamental principle in this province.

This government has taken the most significant steps in 40 years to strengthen our human rights system, to better ensure dignity and justice for all Ontarians. Our strengthened human rights system supports these rights by better enforcing Ontario's Human Rights Code and ensuring dignity by providing timely and efficient access to justice for those who face discrimination in our communities.

I'd like to take the opportunity to say how incredible the events were at the mosque in Peterborough on Saturday night. We are all behind this group, and we support them deeply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I thank the Attorney General for that answer. The work the province has done in this area is honourable and should be a model for other provinces. I was able to see first-hand that profound commitment to human rights and justice when the minister visited various organizations in Kingston and the Islands in the legal and social service fields.

If the Attorney General would elaborate on the mandate of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, as well as some of the processes it uses to uphold human rights in this province, I'm sure this House would be very appreciative of the progress that has been made.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, it's an excellent question. Through education, policy development, and research and analysis, the commission works to preserve the spirit of tolerance that has long characterized Ontario.

In 2008, the Ontario government commissioned a report in order to maximize the potential of the human rights system in the province. I am proud to say that the majority of these recommendations have been implemented.

In developing a new human rights system, we have provided quicker and more direct access for victims of discrimination. We have provided legal supports to help those who would otherwise have difficulty accessing justice. We have focused resources to address systemic human rights issues.

Human rights continue to be a priority for this government and this province.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. This Thursday marks one year since the Liberal government's lack of winter preparedness and oversight allowed the QEW to be turned into a skating rink of traffic chaos for GTA motorists. One year later, the minister still says he has no idea what caused the mess and goes on, despite the auditor's warning, with the same safety-compromising, cut-rate contracts his government introduced in 2009.

As tragedies mount, evidence of the contract failings multiplies to the point that we've now seen the second regional contract fail and quietly go back up for tender in the last six months—the second.

Two contracts have failed within half a year. Will the Premier now agree with the auditor and admit that their performance-based contracts have in fact placed the lives of Ontario motorists at risk?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'll say in advance that my voice is a little bit weak this morning from a lingering cold.

I do appreciate the question from the member of the opposition. He referenced the Auditor General's report from a number of months ago, asking whether or not the government agrees with the auditor's report. Of course, that report contained eight recommendations. I said on the very day that report was released both in our press studio here in this building, but also here in this House repeatedly, that our government does accept all eight of the recommendations that the auditor brought forward.

More importantly, or as importantly, that's why, prior to the auditor being asked to go and examine this particular program, this government took proactive action with

respect to making sure that we had more resources, more equipment and more materials out on our highways. We have since done a great deal of work between last winter season and the winter season that we're now in, Speaker. My expectation is that our contractors will perform accordingly for this winter season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, while they talk about improvements there is no new equipment for this winter, fines levied continue to go uncollected, bare-pavement standards haven't changed and they stick stubbornly to their same performance-based contract system that risks safety.

New Twitter sites and plow-tracking apps do nothing to help the person stuck on the highway in an accident because roads weren't cleared.

Sudbury represents the second failed contract in the last six months. Even contractors themselves realize it's not working. That's why they're dropping off the keys and walking away. That's why the first failed contract in Kenora led to only one bidder coming forward to take the job—and, Speaker, they weren't even from Ontario.

With the announced new RFP for Sudbury road clearing, will the Premier commit that they will not be repeating the performance-based contract mistakes that have led to so many winter tragedies for Ontario families on Ontario roads?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member opposite for the supplementary question.

I'm not quite sure where he is getting his information from, Speaker, with respect to the fact that he alleges that there is no new equipment. From the period in time before the auditor's report right through until this upcoming winter season—actually, the winter season that we're now technically in—there are a great number of additional pieces of equipment that have been deployed to help deal with, for example, truck-climbing lanes in the north, but also ramps and shoulders here in southern Ontario.

I find it interesting that in the first question the member would ask about the auditor's report and then in the supplementary he would effectively mock the government for fulfilling or following through on what the auditor recommended with respect to us providing updated information through the 511 website and through the additional patrolling options that we have out there.

This is a very important upcoming winter season, the season that we're in now. I've had the chance to speak to all of our contractors, as has the ministry. We expect, this season, that the people of Ontario will get the service that they expect and deserve.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Speaker, every year the chief coroner issues a report and makes important recommendations to improve the safety of our loved ones in long-term-care homes. After a 10-month delay, the latest report has been quietly posted online, and it reveals that this Liberal

government is failing seniors, their families and staff in long-term-care homes. This critical report says that there is a need to increase the availability of staff for bedside care and confirms that the behavioural support teams "are not a replacement for sufficient numbers of caring staff who have time to spend with residents."

Speaker, the Premier cannot ignore this scathing report and she cannot ignore the growing needs of our seniors in long-term-care homes. Will the Premier finally act on the urgent need to improve support for seniors and front-line staff in our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question and for her advocacy.

I would also like to thank the coroner's Geriatric and Long-Term Care Review Committee for their hard work in producing this report. We look forward to a careful review of the recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, the committee's report essentially acknowledges what we also acknowledge, which is that the acuity of seniors in our long-term-care homes has been growing for a long time. In particular, there's a growing incidence of aggressive behaviour. That is why we have launched, under the leadership of PA Indira Naidoo-Harris, a province-wide dementia strategy. We look forward to the findings of that report.

In the meantime, we continue to aggressively invest in Behavioural Supports Ontario, which is something that the coroner's report acknowledges.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, again to the Premier: Every senior deserves to live in safety and dignity, but this scathing report confirms that the Liberals are failing 78,000 residents of long-term-care homes in Ontario.

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The coroner is urging the government to take immediate action to address the growing needs of seniors and to finally address understaffing in long-term care. The report makes 112 urgent recommendations, and while the Premier has no obligation to even respond to this report, New Democrats are speaking up today because we all have an obligation to ensure that our seniors and long-term-care staff live and work in safety.

Will the Premier do the right thing for Ontario seniors and commit today to publically respond to all of the coroner's recommendations before this House rises? And if not, why not?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: As I said in my previous answer, we are studying the report. It just came out recently and we are going to be reviewing all of the recommendations. In the meantime, we are going to continue going forward with consulting on our dementia strategy.

I also want to say that the report very clearly acknowledges the skill and dedication of our front-line workers in our long-term-care homes. I want to thank the report's authors for acknowledging it, and I want to echo that.

I want to also assure this House and reassure this House that the safety of our seniors continues to be our number one priority.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question, the member from Ajax–Pickering.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought I sent a message.

Carry on.

ABORIGINAL SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. As the member of provincial Parliament for Ajax–Pickering, I can tell you that I'm happy to be a part of the discussion around sport promotion in aboriginal communities, as some of my friends have sponsored the annual aboriginal hockey tournament just west of here—a great event.

The Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Program, commonly known as CARA, improves the quality of life and well-being of First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities through sport and recreation. By supporting their communities through local initiatives, we help facilitate the creation of a community-driven recreation plan. With greater understanding of local needs, communities can provide solutions for regional needs for sport, recreation and wellness.

To the Minister of Tourism and Culture: Can the minister please share more about the CARA Program with us?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering for the question. The Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Program, CARA, helps to build and support strong and vibrant communities across Ontario. Through community-run programs, we help facilitate local initiatives that help encourage young people to participate in sport and recreation. Initiatives like this allow young people, throughout the communities it serves, to participate in multimedia, in sport recreation, to connect with the great outdoors, and local sport programming.

I'm happy that the CARA Program is recognized as one of the most successful programs in the communities that it serves. We've been able to double the participation level within these programs over the last year to bring us to 57,000 young people participating throughout Ontario. This is exactly the type of program that makes me proud to be a part of this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Minister. In its seven years of operation, the CARA Program has contributed to an improvement in wellness and improved quality of life through sport, recreation and physical activity opportunities. I'm proud of our government's commitment to promoting sport and wellness in aboriginal communities across Ontario.

Recently, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport attended the CARA training symposium on behalf of our government—that was you, Minister—and I'm told that the CARA training symposium featured a variety of workshops and different events and offered opportunities for continued education for both sport and recreation.

Can the minister please share with the House the impact of the continued educational opportunities for CARA Program leaders? Are we doing a good job on this, Minister?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Yes, we are. We're doing a fantastic job. More importantly, the community activators throughout Ontario that are part of this program are doing an incredible job with the young people in the communities they serve.

I had the opportunity to go to the symposium two weeks ago and it was amazing to talk to these young leaders in their communities who participate in these programs. I got to watch a video of these four young women from Lac Seul, which is a First Nation community in Ontario, and to see these four young women pick up a camera and put together a music video through a partnership with the CARA Program. It was just incredible to see. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you go onto YouTube and put in "Echo My Soul," you'll see that they've got 26,000 hits on this video, and it's part of this program. They talk about their community, their culture, and it's through programs like this.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Right now, there are at least 14,000 adults with developmental disabilities on the wait-list for housing. The need is extremely urgent. To get help, one mother had to declare her son homeless. Another young man with autism had to be locked in a psychiatric ward.

When Global News approached the minister for her thoughts, she stated, "Are you sure you want to talk to me?" How insulting. It is the minister's job to provide answers and hope to those affected by this crisis. Why won't the minister provide an answer? Is it because the real answer would expose her and her government's total and inexcusable lack of action?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm very happy to respond to the question from the member opposite.

First of all, our government recognizes the efforts and commitments of families who are supporting their adult children with developmental disabilities. We understand those challenges and we want to work with them. This is why, of course, we did establish developmental service organizations across the province: to ensure equity across the province in terms of prioritization in terms of moving to residential support services.

Of course, we also want to enable people with developmental disabilities to live and participate as fully as possible in their communities. This is why we made the

investment of \$810 million to help those with developmental disabilities. In fact, we are making good progress in providing new residential supports. This year alone, we have supplied 500 additional residential spaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Mr. Speaker, that kind of answer is meaningless for families suffering because of this government's misplaced priorities. They're cutting secret million-dollar cheques to teachers' unions, but to the most vulnerable amongst us, they are being total tightwads. How long will it take to cut down the housing wait-list? Global asked, but the minister wouldn't say. The Auditor General told us that at the current rate, it will take 22 years. That's assuming nobody else joins the list. Families need housing solutions now, not decades down the road.

Speaker, will the minister apologize to families, take responsibility and start helping those most in need, and will she do it now?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I do want to emphasize that families who are on the residential wait-list are already receiving some forms of support through our direct funding programs. In other words, they are receiving supports within the community to assist them while they await residential placement.

We have established a housing task force. I've had the opportunity to travel around the province to make announcements of these demonstration projects. Those with developmental disabilities vary considerably as individuals, as we would expect. Some people need very strong support in their communities; they may have complex medical needs. So we're looking at innovative ways to house individuals in their communities, working in partnership with the community agencies that they need. We have some 12 demonstration projects, and we will have another 12 very shortly.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Some 20,000 pensioners who worked for US Steel and their families have had their pension benefits cut off since October. The Minister of Finance rose in this House to say that the government was going to kick in \$3 million over six months as a transition fund. The problem is, nobody really knows how this transition fund is being administered or how to access the help these pensioners desperately need, the help the minister has promised.

Pensioners are now writing to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in fact, and to the company, not knowing where it is that they should be turning to get the help that was promised by the Minister of Finance.

Nearly two months after these benefits were cut, will the Premier tell this House where the \$3 million in help that she and her minister promised to the pensioners is?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I also wish to acknowledge the work that's being done by the member from Hamilton

East—Stoney Creek—for his good work and advocacy on that side of the bench. We recognize that working together and collaboratively, we can help those most in need, and that's what is happening here.

The government of Ontario has been at the table, has been trying to encourage support for those families. That's why we've earmarked the \$3 million, to support the transition that is going forward. But it's a longer-term process than that. We're trying to enable this operation to be a going concern, to enable those families, those workers, to continue working, and finding ways to make it so.

The industry is in flux. It's not just US Steel; it's the industry and the sector in its entirety. We're reviewing all of that. That has huge implications for the well-being of many families. I recognize the concerns that the leader of the third party is making. We share them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this minister offered \$3 million in transitional help. All I was asking is: Where's the money? He didn't answer my question. It's quite disappointing.

The Minister of Finance also said that the government will "do everything we can" to stand with the retirees as well as the employees. What that means for them is opening up the deal that was signed between US Steel and the federal government.

Will this Premier tell the people of our province—the retirees and their families—what commitments they've secured from the federal government to protect pensioners and the vital benefits of 20,000 US Steel pensioners?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Seriously, Mr. Speaker, of course we've been trying to identify the secret deal that was made by the Harper government of the past, and we're trying to determine what that means going forward.

But the member seems to be antagonistic here. We're trying to find ways to foster the well-being of these families. The money is available, as required; we're going through those negotiations now. Her member has actually been at the table enabling us and working together, and we will continue to do that for the benefit of the people of Hamilton who were exposed by this very unfortunate situation. We're going to try to encourage and find ways to provide the greatest safeguards available to them.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

PRÉVENTION DE L'INTIMIDATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday marked the first day of Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. The province has designated Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week on the third Sunday of November to help promote safe schools and a positive learning environment.

Three years ago, the Accepting Schools Act was passed in this Legislature. It requires school boards to take greater measures to prevent bullying and issue tougher consequences for those who bully others.

Minister, what is the government doing to help provide students and teachers across the province a safe, inclusive and accepting learning and teaching environment?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

Ontario has a Safe Schools Strategy in place and specific policies that require that all schools have bullying prevention and intervention plans and procedures in place, as well as safe and accepting schools teams. These teams are made up of a variety of students, teachers and people representing the community, and they are responsible for making sure that the school is providing a safe and welcoming learning environment for its students and staff. As you know, Speaker, a safe and welcoming learning environment is so important.

Schools have been provided with resources and training for teachers and principals to support the work of these teams. Schools are encouraged to work with their teams to educate students about all the different forms that bullying can take. That includes physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying and electronic or cyberbullying, as we commonly know it. All those different forms of bullying need to be dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M. John Fraser: L'année dernière, le Prix de la première ministre pour les écoles tolérantes a reconnu certaines équipes des écoles sécuritaires et tolérantes de l'Ontario pour leurs efforts considérables et leur contribution aux collectivités de la province.

L'École élémentaire catholique Lamoureux, dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Sud, a été choisie comme récipiendaire du prix de la première ministre 2014-2015 pour l'adoption de la méthode « arrête, marche et parle ».

In fact, Mr. Speaker, a school climate survey conducted at École élémentaire catholique Lamoureux revealed more than 97% of students felt strongly that they were supported and felt safe at school.

Minister, please explain how other schools in Ontario can qualify as a recipient of the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools.

Hon. Liz Sandals: My congratulations go out to École élémentaire catholique Lamoureux.

Recipients of the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools are safe and accepting school teams who, first, demonstrate initiative, creativity and leadership in at least three specified areas related to the school climate. Secondly, they must identify the specific challenges faced by the team, and how they were addressed. Thirdly, they provide evidence that the activities that they have arranged have made a significant difference in the school community. The member just gave the example of 97% of students in the award-winning school feeling safe at school. All safe and accepting school teams across Ontario are eligible to apply for the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools.

Once again, congratulations to the 10 school teams who have been selected this year for the award.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Today, the on-peak electricity price is 17.5 cents per kilowatt hour. That is more than four times what it was when the Liberal government first came to power. The government keeps saying that the increases were below their projections from the 2013 long-term energy plan so, apparently, we're worrying too much.

The Ontario Energy Board even says that there is a simple solution to these soaring energy costs: Ontarians should just conserve a bit harder, and work during off-peak hours. Residents in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock are fed up with these poor policy choices from this government. Did the government expect seniors on fixed incomes to freeze during peak periods, businesses to close, and dairy cattle to hold their milk until off-peak hours?

How can the minister say to Ontarians that, to better manage their bills, they should just stop working and heating their homes during on-peak hours?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that our 2013 long-term energy plan's projected rates are coming in lower than projected, and that the increases that have been announced recently are lower than those that were projected in our long-term energy plan.

In addition, the member knows we are continuing to mitigate rates with a series of mitigation programs. Again, I repeat: I don't think any of the members on that side have prepared a list of those programs and provided them publicly in their households to their constituents.

We're still adding more mitigation measures to assist customers with their bills. In the supplementary, I'll go into more detail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that people are still paying more for energy. The Liberal government's long-term energy plan continues to subsidize industrial wind and solar power. The Ontario Energy Board even said that a third of the electricity increase came from the costs of this government's Green Energy Act.

Ontarians shouldn't have to give up more of their hard-earned money just so that the government can stand on a soapbox and preach photo-op environmentalism. As it turns out, the government isn't green enough to stop wind turbines from popping up on the sensitive Oak Ridges moraine, in Manvers and Bethany and the city of Kawartha Lakes.

Ontarians shouldn't have to continue to starve, freeze in the cold and sell their homes because of this government's energy policies. Mr. Speaker, how can the minister continue to support energy policies that are starving and bankrupting hard-working Ontarians who are struggling to make ends meet every day?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will know that, as we sit here today, the Ontario Energy Board is advertising, through newspapers and other means, the new

Ontario Electricity Support Program, which, for modest-income families, will save them \$360 to \$400 per year.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to get a warning.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In addition to that, we know that the debt retirement charge is coming off on January 1, which will take another \$70 per year off their bills.

We are also reminding people, starting now, through January–February, that for senior citizens, they will be able to apply for their tax credit and get up to \$1,060 off their electricity rates.

There are a lot of programs they can access. I would ask the members opposite to communicate to their constituents those programs that are available rather than standing up here with rants.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. The government has announced that it is looking for public input into setting up a third-party certification program for compliance with Ontario's accessibility legislation, the AODA. By "third party," of course, this government means privatization, and any input is already being considered through this lens.

This government shouldn't be interested in accessibility for Ontarians facing barriers because it's commercially viable or opens new markets; the government should be invested because it's in fact the law. How will this government ensure, 10 years after, that the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act will finally be enforced?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Much to the temptation to go otherwise, I want to respond to the member's question. Yes, indeed, while I was at an event with Colleges Ontario yesterday, where Rick Hansen was speaking as the motivational speaker, we were talking about an initiative that Rick Hansen has been a champion of. That's looking at ways that we can reach out to the business community and recognize those businesses that are excelling in becoming accessible, similar to the way that the LEED program works, with gold, platinum and bronze.

The leading person and the leading organization in doing this in Canada thus far has been Rick Hansen and his foundation. We would be open to others doing this kind of work as well, but surely the member doesn't have a philosophical problem with this government working with Rick Hansen on accessibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, Rick Hansen certainly is one of our most revered advocates for people with disabilities, but unless the government intends on having Rick do the enforcement part of the AODA, I don't think you're actually going to be able to follow through with your commitments—and thank you, Rick.

Speaker, my brother is a quadriplegic. We know the barriers that people with injuries face. Disability advocates have been clear: They don't need certification; they need enforcements of the AODA. What does it matter if the source of the barrier has been certified?

After 10 years, how will you enforce the AODA?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know that this member cares a lot about this issue, and we do as well. We're going to take our advice from experts like Rick Hansen, because nobody knows better than Mr. Hansen when it comes to these issues. We're going to use models that work and have worked in the past. It's really important that we change the dynamics in this province and across this country when it comes to business perceptions about the need and the importance, from a business case, of becoming accessible.

There are many ways that we can do that. Compliance is one of them; enforcement is another. But it's really important that businesses embrace our ability to become accessible. A LEED-like program in Ontario would be a first in Canada and something that we're working very closely on with the likes of Rick Hansen to achieve. We're proud of that, and I would expect the member ultimately to support it.

VISITORS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Dr. Gerald Smith from the Ontario Dental Association, who has joined us today for all of question period. Welcome, Doctor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook, I would like to welcome students from Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Elementary School from Stoney Creek to the House today; also, Cindy Lolua for grades 5 and 6 and Clarerose Mascarenhas for grades 4 and 5. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 8, 2015, Mr. Flynn moved second reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour.

Ms. Albanese has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour of Ms. Albanese's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoggart, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Orazietti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Pettapiece, Randy
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Qaqadi, Shafiq
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Sandals, Liz
Dei Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Todd
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Thompson, Lisa M.
	McMahon, Eleanor	Vernile, Daine
	Zimmer, David	Wilkerson, Jim
		Wong, Soo
		Yakabuski, John
		Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	MacLaren, Jack	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Vanhoft, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa		

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 44.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1154.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm
Arnott, Ted	Hoggart, Ann	Munro, Julia

Bailey, Robert	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hudak, Tim	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Orazietti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Potts, Arthur
Brown, Patrick	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaqadi, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Crack, Grant	MacLeod, Lisa	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Smith, Todd
Dei Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daine
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Wilson, Jim
	Zimmer, David	Wong, Soo
		Yakabuski, John
		Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Gretzky, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Hatfield, Percy	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Horwath, Andrea	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanhoft, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 19.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Yes? It shall be ordered?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: To the justice committee, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It shall be referred to the justice committee.

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: There was some very unparliamentary language used by the leader of the third party. She should withdraw immediately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I listened to the point of order. All members have their own watch to see whether or not they've said anything. If I heard it—I did not. If anyone does use unparliamentary language, I rely on them to identify and withdraw.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: With us in the gallery we have Elia Vigna, who is a member of the Markham prenatal be-

reavement group. She's here for the introduction of a private member's bill, the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness, Research and Care Act, to be introduced a bit later. Welcome, Elia, to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEL O'BRIEN

Mr. John Yakabuski: Forty-seven years ago, Del O'Brien began a journey that has culminated in a book entitled Pem-Air: The Community Airline That Did It All. In the book he traces the history of the Pembroke and area airline over which he presided from 1968 until 2000.

The book tells a story of amazing success because of the ingenuity of one man and the belief and trust of so many others. Del recalls how he convinced the leaders of 12 area municipalities to combine their resources and build a 5,000-foot runway.

Pem-Air was soon airborne with flights to Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City. It also carried radio isotopes for Atomic Energy of Canada to Boston and New York, and conducted air ambulance missions.

I was honoured to receive a personalized copy of his book on the weekend. I have known Del since 1968, when he was the Conservative candidate in the federal election. He rolled into Barry's Bay with a flatbed—a moving platform—as he spoke to the crowd in my hometown. I was one of the youth assembled with him on that platform. Since then, he has continued to be a friend and a trusted mentor.

He promised some years ago that when he retired from active law practice he would write a book, so that everyone would get their boarding pass on Pem-Air. While Del goes out of his way to express his appreciation and gratitude to so many, including the employees of Pem-Air, it is clear that without his efforts it's unlikely the airline would have ever gotten off the ground.

The official book launch is taking place today from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Travelodge in Pembroke, with additional signings in Petawawa, Deep River and Eganville.

I thank and congratulate Del for his efforts and I encourage everyone to get a copy of Pem-Air: The Community Airline That Did It All.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: In my riding of Oshawa, parts of Durham and Scarborough there has been a change: a cost-savings initiative that undermines patient care in our communities. Occupational therapists, or OTs, and physiotherapists, PTs, are being targeted as budget lines are taking priority over the safety and care of people in need of home care. Following the Auditor General's report on September 1, local CCACs had to re-evaluate their policies and started robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Here's what is happening in my area: When someone leaves the hospital and is discharged to go home, there is a plan put in place. This plan involves what support is necessary to care for them in their homes. Since September, however, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in my community have seen a steep decline in the care that is being allowed. Now a patient must be borderline bedridden to qualify for any services or support. Only the high risk get care, and those who used to get service are now getting waitlisted, with no hope of service.

I've also heard concerns from another organization, the Durham Region Stroke Recovery Group, who have advocated for extended physiotherapy for individuals recovering from a stroke. In fact, the government supported a motion which called to extend their coverage earlier this year. This would be a proactive investment in our health care system that would make a world of difference for this group of people and could save the government money in the long term.

I ask the government to consider the impact of their decisions, remember the commitment they've made to stroke victims and put the interests of victims first instead of trying to balance the budget on their backs.

BERNARD BETEL CENTRE

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The Bernard Betel Centre for Creative Living recently celebrated the organization's 50th year. The centre was founded in 1965 with only 50 members. The centre has grown into an organization which now serves more than 5,000 seniors, including those who are unable to leave their home.

The centre, located in my riding of York Centre, has been dedicated to helping seniors in our community live active, creative and healthy lifestyles within a Jewish environment. This is very crucial, because in our province the number of seniors aged 65 and over is projected to number 4.1 million by 2036. As the number of seniors in Ontario increases, it is critically important to ensure that there are enough resources in our communities that are available to assist older Ontarians. The centre is one of the many vital resources we have here in our community.

The centre helps to ensure that seniors in York Centre remain mentally, physically and emotionally engaged. The vast range of programs and services offered is nothing short of astounding: computer classes, painting, Zumba, creative writing, knitting, pottery and so much more. Because of this establishment, seniors throughout York Centre live active, healthy and vibrant lives and improve their overall quality of life.

Speaker, today I would like to congratulate them and thank them for their milestone achievement of 50 years of servicing the community of York Centre.

ONTARIO CHRISTIAN GLEANERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the House about a unique service organization which

channels Christian faith into action while seeking to feed a hungry world.

Each weekday morning, more than 50 volunteers at Ontario Christian Gleaners, located on Morrison Road in Cambridge, process and then drive 5,000 to 6,000 pounds of donated surplus and off-grade vegetables, apples and pears to make nutritious dehydrated soup mixes and fruit snacks for distribution in impoverished countries and refugee camps.

The soup mixes and fruit snacks are shipped and distributed by relief and development organizations, which are able to ensure that they're given to people in need, are committed to sustainability and development, and combine a gospel message with humanitarian aid. Each three-pound bag of Gleaners' soup mix makes 100 bowls of soup when it's served in the Third World. They calculate that one hour of volunteer service at Gleaners generates 146 food servings.

Gleaners has sent soup mixes and fruit snacks to help feed people in over 40 countries, including Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Romania.

My friends Bill and Carol Baxter are amongst the hundreds of Gleaners volunteers who give generously of their time and talents, knowing their efforts are making a direct, positive difference in the lives of needy people abroad.

I join with the member for Cambridge to thank and commend Ontario growers and everyone involved with Ontario Christian Gleaners for putting their faith to work to help feed the famished around the globe.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It has been six long years since Sam Bruno started a campaign to bring a PET scanner to Sudbury. Over 32,000 people have signed a petition requesting this government to put a PET scanner in Sudbury. The hospitals from the northeast, the municipalities, the First Nations, the church leaders—everybody agrees that the northeast needs equity of access and needs a PET scanner.

Since then, new technology now exists for a mobile PET scanner. The minister has asked the PET steering committee to review the possibility of a mobile PET scanner. The report is positive. It has been with the minister for months. We have companies willing and able to bring a PET scanner to Sudbury. The Bruno family is willing to pay for the difference in price to have the docking station, and a PET scan in Sudbury or in Toronto costs the same, so there is no money implication. But we need the minister's action.

Where is this minister when it comes to equity of access for the people of the north? Year after year of delays are unacceptable and unfair. I questioned the minister about this recently, and he said that it is coming. Well, winter is also coming, and with this means people with cancer having to drive for four, six, 12 hours to go

to Toronto through hail, rain, sleet, bad weather, freezing rain.

We need a PET scanner in northeastern Ontario. We've waited long enough.

1510

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Yesterday, I had the pleasure of announcing the start of a very important construction project in my riding of Kitchener Centre: a new layover facility for GO trains and GO buses that's going to serve my community.

In Waterloo region, there is great urgency to increase rail service between our community and the GTA. Over the past year, I have listened to and worked very closely with a number of stakeholders, including municipal leaders, those in the high-tech sector, manufacturing, the insurance industry, academia and many more. Together, we have put our concerns before Metrolinx and the province of Ontario.

People in Waterloo region are looking for travel options that are convenient, safe and reliable. Many of us want to leave our cars at home and take public transit instead.

Once it's finished in 2016, this transit hub that sits on a nine-acre property is going to include storage and maintenance for four GO trains and 20 GO buses. It's going to allow us to give customers two new morning train trips from Kitchener to Toronto and two new afternoon train trips from Toronto back to Kitchener.

Mr. Speaker, the Kitchener line is a top priority in the Moving Ontario Forward plan. It's a 10-year initiative that is going to deliver all-day two-way GO train service to our region. As a voice for Waterloo region, I can tell you that advancing better transit in my community is a top priority for me, too.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a very direct question for my colleagues: Would you want to live next door to a giant sludge dump?

Interjections: No.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course not, and neither do my constituents. But that's exactly what's proposed in Beamsville, in the town of Lincoln.

Speaker, members have strong positive associations with Beamsville, home to so many wineries, tender-fruit farms and agri-tourism businesses. It's a gorgeous place to live.

But right among these beautiful homes, farms and wineries, a company called Shire Corp. wants to take over a former poultry processing facility and turn the lagoons for water runoff into, get this, human biosolid sludge lagoons—open lagoons with biosolids, which is a polite term, in many respects, for treated human waste, being put into the agricultural lands in Niagara, in Beamsville. This is not an agricultural use.

Look, I understand that the product has to go somewhere. I've had a chance to speak with the environment minister. I appreciate his attention to this issue. I know that he, like me, believes there are environmental technologies that can help with better uses of this, perhaps towards energy. My colleague from Huron-Bruce, our environment critic, was talking about just that. That makes a lot more sense than dumping the waste into sludge lagoons and leaving it there.

What's worse: The hundred trucks a day going in and out or the sludge lagoon?

I ask the Minister of the Environment to stay on this path and if you would consider intervening in the OMB hearing, to stand up for local residents.

KIWANIS CLUB OF CAMBRIDGE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Earlier this fall, I enjoyed attending the banquet marking the Kiwanis Club of Cambridge's 95th anniversary of service to my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries township and, also, to those in need around the world. The work these Kiwanians do is certainly worthy of gratitude and recognition in this House. From bursaries for students, Air Cadets, international aid and 4-H clubs, which just celebrated 100 years of service to our young people, their work is far-reaching.

The Kiwanis Boys Choir is a gift to all of the audiences who sit in front of them, and they've represented Cambridge on the world stage. During the gala celebration, we were treated to some of their very beautiful vocal music.

I really want to pass on my thank yous to choir director James Kropf for your vision and ongoing commitment to these young men and boys and for your inspired leadership.

Peter Tudisco, past district governor, spoke to me about the collective work that Kiwanis Clubs do on the international stage. They raise over \$100 million annually to support a number of worthy causes. One such cause is their Eliminate Project that seeks to end neonatal and maternal tetanus around the globe. In partnership with UNICEF, Kiwanis aims to eliminate this very deadly disease that claims the life of a baby every nine minutes. About 17 countries are tetanus-free now.

I'm proud to recognize the work of the Kiwanians.

Thank you to President Sharma, Vice-President Don Pavey, and the committed board members for your committed work to the Kiwanis Club.

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

VEILLÉE AUX CHANDELLES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Last Sunday, I hosted a multi-faith candlelight vigil in my riding of Kingston and the Islands to honour all victims of violence in Paris, Baghdad, Beirut, Kenya and beyond. Approximately 250 Kingstonians came out to soundly reject these assaults on

the foundation of our society and our very connection to the people around us.

Make no mistake: Ontarians and Canadians categorically denounce these acts of violence.

Since the Paris tragedy, we have seen a fire in a mosque in Peterborough, a Hindu temple vandalized in Kitchener, and a young mother in Toronto who was brutally attacked and terrorized. We can and we must do better than this.

I encourage each and every one of you to stand strong as we are challenged by the few to commit random, indiscriminate and horrific acts of violence. Guard and hold hard onto your own moments of peace and sense of security in our everyday lives.

Terrorists want us to look at our neighbours with suspicion and fear. Kingstonians reject that. Be united with your communities and denounce acts of violence, for to fail is to succumb to the aim of terrorism.

Si seulement les victimes de Paris pouvaient être le dernier sacrifice sur la route de la paix.

Peace be with you. Inshallah. Thank you. Merci.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 17, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Mike Colle: On behalf of Chairman Crack, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 22, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMART GRID CYBER SECURITY AND PRIVACY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ DU RÉSEAU INTELLIGENT ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 140, An Act respecting smart grid cyber security and privacy / Projet de loi 140, Loi portant sur la cybersécurité du réseau intelligent et la protection de la vie privée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Briefly, this bill is meant to put in place regulations of cyber security and privacy with a smart meter system, and to provide for enforcement of those standards.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS, RESEARCH AND CARE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AU DEUIL PÉRINATAL, LA RECHERCHE SUR CE GENRE DE DEUIL ET L'AIDE AUX PERSONNES VIVANT UN TEL DEUIL

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to require research to be undertaken and programs to be developed for pregnancy loss and infant death and to proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day / Projet de loi 141, Loi exigeant des recherches et des programmes sur les pertes de grossesse et les décès néonataux et proclamant le 15 octobre Journée de sensibilisation au deuil périnatal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: Every year, thousands of mothers in Ontario experience pregnancy and infant loss. This bill, if passed, would amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to set out additional duties for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The minister is required to establish research initiatives and undertake a comparative analysis with respect to pregnancy loss and infant death. The minister is also required to establish and develop programs to reduce the risk of pregnancy loss and infant death and to assist and provide counselling and support to mothers and families who experience pregnancy loss or infant death.

The bill also, if passed, would proclaim October 15 of each year as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Subsection 20(2.1) is added to the act. That subsection prohibits a person entitled to custody of a child from creating or maintaining unreasonable barriers to the formation and continuation of personal relationships between the child and the child's grandparents.

Subsection 24(2) of the act is amended. That subsection sets out the needs and circumstances of a child that the court must consider in determining the best interests of the child. The bill adds to that list the emotional ties between the child and the child's grandparents and the willingness of each person applying for custody of the child to facilitate contact with the child's grandparents, if such contact would be appropriate in the circumstances.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment seeks to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 9 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 9 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank Rhonda Ferguson from Hydro One Not For Sale for co-sponsoring a public meeting with me, and for the resulting petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to the petition and send it to the table with page Hannah.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: I received these from many constituents across the Superior North area in support of the Ontario Medical Association. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Benjamin to bring it down to the table of the Clerks.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Ben to bring down.

LAKE NIPISSING WALLEYE FISHERY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association’s (LNSA) mission is to provide for the long-term health and sustainability of Lake Nipissing and its fishery; and

“Whereas the walleye population is of particular importance to all stakeholders, the association aims to achieve this mission primarily through an intensive walleye restocking program; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry’s only answer to manage the walleye population decline is through more stringent regulations to the recreational fishery, but fails to impose any restriction on the commercial fishery, and furthermore imposed new restrictions on egg harvest for restocking, making restocking unfeasible; and

“Whereas the LNSA has voluntarily done restocking, without these restrictions for over 30 years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To remove the restrictions placed on the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association (2015) and to allow them to restock Lake Nipissing with walleye at higher volumes (20 million).”

I agree with this petition. I sign my name to it and give it to page Rachael.

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PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I present this petition, a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll sign it and will give it to page Brooke.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I have a petition to bring forward.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and give it to page Ross.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there is a critical need for residential care options for young people 18-64 suffering the devastating long-term effects of a severe brain injury in Renfrew county and to the extent that the only option available is staying in acute care or being inappropriately placed in long-term care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“I request the Ministry of Health answer the need by funding a 24-hour supported residential home in Renfrew county so that those who have been housed in a hospital for as long as five years can be adequately supported in their own home in the community of their choice. The right care at the right time in the right location.”

I want to thank Karen Rekowski for her work in obtaining this petition on behalf of her brother, and the hundreds of people who have signed it. I support it, affix my name and send it down with Aminah.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Gilles Joliat, who is from my riding in Chelmsford and collected 722 signatures. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the residents of northern Ontario, particularly people who are sick or elderly, depend on public transportation for appointments in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas intercity bus routes have been eliminated by Greyhound, for example, all daytime routes between Sudbury and Ottawa; and

“Whereas there have been serious reductions at Ontario Northland, including the elimination of Northland’s train services;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: Ensure that Ontario Northland offers adequate and equitable intercity transportation service from northern to southern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Hannah to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, the Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage, back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41...."

I support this, Mr. Speaker, I affix my name to it and I give it to page Benjamin.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have here a petition that I have been receiving for quite a number of months. We receive thousands and thousands of these signatures, and every Monday I get to bring boxes full to the Minister of the Environment. I just want to read it into the record one more time:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycl-

ing or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as to not require disposal in landfills."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition. I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

VETERANS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have a very timely petition, considering we just finished our Remembrance Day ceremonies across the province.

"Lest We Forget Our Duty to Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we have a collective duty of care to all veterans for their service and sacrifice; and

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 narrowly defines the term 'veteran,' restricting priority access to long-term-care beds to veterans who served prior to 1953; and

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 omits veterans who enlisted after 1953 (modern-day veterans) from access to priority long-term-care beds; and

"Whereas the current population of modern-day veterans in Ontario is four times that of traditional veterans; and

"Whereas modern-day veterans are not eligible to apply for the existing 1,097 long-term-care beds designated specifically for Ontario veterans; and

"Whereas only one in seven (1 in 7) veterans is eligible for priority long-term care in Ontario, a problem that will only increase as modern-day veterans age in keeping with national demographic trends;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act (Preference for Veterans), 2015 which extends priority access to long-term-care beds to modern-day veterans, including former officers and former non-commissioned members of the Canadian Forces."

I support the petition, affix my signature and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

TENANT PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? The member from Simcoe—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Simcoe-Grey. Your timing is impeccable, Mr. Speaker. This is a petition from the residents of Country Meadows, Wasaga Beach, Ontario.

"Whereas our present land leases with Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc. are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA); however, they are exempted from the protection of rent controls under the act. Being part 1, section 6, subsection 2, and,

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"Whereas the landlord has the option to increase the monthly land rental by \$50 above the existing rent, to a new purchaser, when a home is sold.

"Whereas 'Country Meadows' is a community of permanent homes located on leased lands whose residents are retired and living on fixed incomes. Continued rental increases beyond the guidelines of the RTA, is unsustainable to retired residents on fixed incomes.

"Therefore, we the undersigned residents of 'Country Meadows,' petition the Legislature to change the RTA to include rent controls for retirement type communities located on leased lands and, to delete the option given to landlords to increase land rental rates upon sale of a home in such communities. The foregoing would enable retirees to remain in their homes and enjoy their hard-earned retirement years."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition; I'd be happy to sign it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions is now over.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence for private members' public business such that Ms. Malhi assumes ballot item number 11 and Ms. Wong assumes ballot item number 12.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to stand in the House and share the voice of my constituents from Windsor West. It's also my pleasure to speak to Bill 122 today, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Today in 2015, we know and understand more about mental illness than at any other time in our history. We know, for instance, that mental health is impacted by the social determinants of health such as income and stable housing. According to Statistics Canada, Canadians in the lowest income groups are three to four times more

likely to report poor to fair mental health than those in the highest income groups. As our knowledge of mental illness expands, it is important for the laws that govern our society to expand and grow to remain respectful and relevant. I think this is at the crux of what we are discussing today, Speaker.

I would first like to thank all those working to expand our knowledge of mental illness and all those improving the lives of people suffering from mental illness and addictions throughout Ontario. Specifically, in my community of Windsor, there are several institutions and initiatives that do incredibly valuable work in the area of mental health.

Mental Health Connections provides integrated psychosocial rehabilitation services to Windsor and Essex county adults with mental illness. Their centre is a welcoming environment where individuals can access a variety of strategies for recovery, including social, recreational, fitness, education, vocational and peer support activities both on-site and out in the community.

The Windsor Residence for Young Men also performs important work in Windsor and Essex county to raise awareness of mental health illness and the presence of mental health issues in homeless youth. The organization indicates that out of 65,000 homeless youth across Canada—65,000 youth, Speaker—33% suffer from mental illness.

New Beginnings Windsor provides young people suffering from addictions with a rehabilitation program that includes residential services, counselling, support, supervision and aftercare.

The Windsor Essex Community Health Centre is another important organization in my community working to support those suffering from addictions and mental health issues.

There is also a wonderful organization called the Windsor Youth Centre—it's actually in the riding of Windsor-Tecumseh, but they service all of Windsor and Essex county. We call it the WYC. I want to take time to congratulate them, because they had a very generous donor come forward from the community, and then they did a fundraising campaign in order to purchase their very own home. They were renting; now they've moved into a new location. We had a lot of community members come together and construction companies come in and do work and build a really great place for the youth in our community to come to. We have homeless youth. They service at-risk youth. They service the youth who have mental health issues or perhaps addiction issues. I encourage anybody, if they come to Windsor to visit, to stop by the WYC and see the incredible work that they do there on a regular basis for the youth in our community.

Speaker, in my 10 minutes today, I couldn't come close to mentioning all the important work on mental illness done by individuals and organizations in my community. Luckily, there is a collaborative project in Windsor called We R Kids & Youth Mental Health that provides online resources and information about youth

mental health and addiction issues for educators, service providers, community partners, parents and students in Windsor-Essex. I would encourage all members of this chamber to visit their website and get a sense of how seriously the people of Windsor and Essex county take mental illness, and the breadth of the work they are doing in this area.

I think it's important, as legislators, that we make every effort to know the services and supports for mental illness in our communities and throughout the province. Let's be clear: According to the Ministry of Health, approximately 30% of Ontarians will experience a mental health or substance abuse challenge during their lifetime; 30% of everyone in Ontario will be touched by mental illness or addiction. One out of 40 people will face a serious mental illness.

As legislators, we need to ensure that the laws we bring forward at Queen's Park respect Ontarians suffering from mental illness, as well as their friends and families. We need to make sure that the voices of patients in psychiatric facilities and hospitals are heard so that their treatment is appropriate and consensual. We need to listen to the countless families, organizations, experts and individuals who have important insight into the broader changes that need to be made to mental health legislation.

At times, Speaker, the courts inform the government, by handing down a decision, that certain laws violate our rights and freedoms entrenched in the charter and must be changed. This brings us to today's debate on the amendments to the Mental Health Act outlined in Bill 122. On December 23, 2014, the Court of Appeal ruled that some existing provisions of the Mental Health Act violate section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court gave this Legislature one year to amend the Mental Health Act to better protect the rights of patients.

Bill 122 was introduced to comply with the unanimous decision of the court. Very briefly, this bill seeks to protect the rights of long-term, involuntary mental health patients. It provides the Consent and Capacity Board with new powers to make orders concerning the manner of detention for involuntary patients who have been in hospital for longer than six months. The province is also seeking to allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. We are told that this will free up psychiatrists for more complex hearings, such as those expected for involuntary patients who have been in a psychiatric facility longer than six months.

Speaker, mental health law is immensely complicated and fraught with a history of failing to respect the rights of patients. As MPPs, we need to listen to the voices of the families and individuals with experience in dealing with mental illness in Ontario. We need to hear from legal experts and advocacy organizations, and we need to make sure that we get these amendments right for the sake of all Ontarians.

This is why New Democrats find it so troubling that the government waited until the last minute to introduce their changes, and as a result, MPPs have only weeks to

consider and debate this important legislation. The clock is ticking and the deadline of December 23, 2015, is fast approaching. It really drives home the point that we don't have much longer here, where we sit, before the holiday break, so we really are pushing through legislation that should have been given more time for consideration. By taking nine months to simply introduce Bill 122 and another month to call this bill for second reading debate, the government effectively reduced the time that the Legislature has to consider these amendments from 12 months to, now, less than two months.

Speaker, this impedes the ability of MPPs to do our jobs. This bill, and the topic of mental illness more generally, deserves more time and attention in the chamber, but this government is not showing leadership on this issue. Tabling a bill in the last instance and rushing to meet a deadline is just one example.

While the government is rightly expanding the authority of the Consent and Capacity Board, the Liberals have allocated less funding for the CCB this year. Interim actuals for 2014-15 show expenditures of \$6.2 million, but for 2015-16, the CCB is allocated just \$4.8 million, even though the government is expanding the mandate and authority of the CCB.

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In Ontario schools, major cuts to in-classroom resources make it more difficult to identify mental illness in our youngest generations. Reductions in special education funding at 38 boards throughout Ontario is not the way forward if we are to take mental health and mental illness seriously.

Speaker, as I've stated throughout my time here today, New Democrats are disappointed that this government waited until the last instance to bring this legislation forward. The government should show leadership in bringing these issues forward, but procrastinated and is now rushing through legislation.

I wish I had more time to debate this bill today and that the government allowed the Legislature more time to discuss this legislation and mental illness more generally. Despite the Liberal government rushing through this legislation, New Democrats recognize that Bill 122 seeks to protect the rights of long-term involuntary mental health patients in accordance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We firmly believe that the rights of all Ontarians must be protected, and all mental health legislation must reflect the fundamental rights enshrined in the charter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's good to hear the comments from the member for Windsor West. I guess I fundamentally disagree. This was an enormous amount of input, many members of caucus—I worked on the streets for over a dozen years with children, particularly in this, including members of my own family.

This is under a court order and the amount of time that was in there to actually get the representations—I think that many of us as MPPs heard on this. I had round table

discussions here with parents on both sides of this issue about forcing children, as they do in the United States, into forced treatment versus the civil liberties. This is one of the most difficult issues, and the government had to act. I'm glad we did not act precipitously.

But I don't think the conversation stops here, having spent a lot of my life working with kids who are, sadly, physically and sexually abused in their homes, end up on the streets, often damaged most by the people who are supposed to care for and love them, on the one hand, and on the other hand, parents who have children who have extreme mental health issues and addictions issues, trying to resolve that. This is at the very core of that.

I would hope that we get this bill through quickly because the vacuum that's out there right now is creating real harm and real risks to individuals, to children and to families. There is nothing stopping us from having government motions going forward. We've done a lot of work with mental health, the great work that my friend Michael Wilson has done for access to services.

I will tell you, I've lived in four different provinces in Canada, and the level of access to mental health services in Ontario is so far superior to every other jurisdiction. The clinic I worked in in Winnipeg, which had a large mental health component, because we worked with street-involved youth, didn't get funding from the provincial government, which was an NDP government—wouldn't even give us a billing number, and we worked for five years with volunteer nurses and doctors. We were the front lines of most of the mental health and addictions issues in the city.

There is no perfect government. There is no perfect situation. But I think, in this case, the enemy of good here is perfect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add my comments to the debate and the wise words that we heard from the member from Windsor West. I appreciated how she commented on how her local community strives to ensure that people with mental illness feel dignity and respect and inclusion, as they should. I also respect that she, as well as the third party, as we are here in the opposition, is frustrated with the manner in which this government is currently dealing with legislation. They leave things hanging for a number of months and they rush to conclude them. It really binds people in terms of being able to raise their voice and eloquently speak to an issue and why legislation matters, specifically with regard to mental health.

We have to remember that mental health is equally as important as physical health. If we don't address it properly, it is a huge burden in terms of the costs that are associated in caring for these individuals. In fact, our critic for health, our very capable critic—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It's only because I'm here.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's only because he's here, yes, but I would say it even if he wasn't here, Speaker. MPP Yurek has gone on to say and state that this could

cost our health care system upwards of \$51 billion a year if we don't address it properly. That concern was echoed recently during advocacy day by PAO, the Police Association of Ontario. They, too, stand with us here in opposition saying that if we don't adequately address mental health in a timely fashion, it's a drain on their resources as well.

Once again, mental health is equally as important as physical health. I commend the member from Windsor West for drawing some very important issues to light here in the House today. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm happy to weigh in for a couple of minutes here and thank the member from Windsor West for her comments about trying to know what agencies are actually in your communities, that are out there to actually support people with mental health issues.

Unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on which way you look at it—there are 440 agencies across the province for adults, another 330 for children and another 150 for substance abuse. I can tell you that in my own riding, which encompasses five municipalities—some of our members have 26 or 52 municipalities in their ridings—there is no overall umbrella organization to actually make sure that these agencies are communicated to the greater public. We have people come into our office all the time who don't know where to go; and, frankly, many of us don't know where to tell them to go, because we're not even aware of some of these agencies that are actually in our communities. The member from London—Fanshawe introduced a bill called Bill 95, Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, and part of that bill was to actually create this umbrella agency which would do a really good job at making sure that we have equal access across the province.

The other piece is, the minister talked about the short period of time that they've had. Well, they've had six years to implement some of the select committee recommendations on mental health and addictions—six years. To date, they've introduced one half of one recommendation out of 22 great recommendations that received all-party support six years ago.

So although this bill is important and it needs some quick remedy, there are certainly lots of mental health issues that have been sitting around for many, many years that need addressing as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 122. As the act says on the front page of the legislation, it's An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996. As a former public health nurse and a registered nurse, I see such importance in passing this legislation. We heard from the courts and now we're responding to the issues from the courts.

One part I wanted to make sure the viewers at home and those who watch later in the day—I know constituents of mine watch this particular debate later in the evening. The proposed legislation, if passed, will address some of the court's decisions by providing the Consent and Capacity Board, an independent tribunal, with the power to issue new orders respecting the manner in which long-term involuntary patients are detained, where currently the Consent and Capacity Board can only confirm or rescind the involuntary status. That's an important thing, Mr. Speaker, because we've heard from the court, and now the minister of the day is addressing the concern.

The other piece with regard to the proposed amendments is that it will also maximize the liberty of long-term, involuntary patients commensurate with the circumstances requiring their involuntary detention. So there are actually amendments being proposed to two pieces of legislation because we have heard from the courts.

I heard the concern from my colleague from Windsor West. When you have existing legislation, any time you try to amend or to repeal legislation that already exists, it takes a little bit longer. If it's a brand new piece of legislation with a clean slate, introducing the bill and debating the bill is much cleaner, but we have existing legislation now that we need to amend because we have heard from the court. It does take time.

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I do appreciate the comments made by my colleague from Windsor West and, as well, the others from the opposition parties.

At the end of the day, we need to respect the court.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Windsor West for her final comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'll just touch on a couple of points that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the member from Huron-Bruce made. They both made points that kind of tie into each other.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change was saying that this whole process does take some time. I would suggest that maybe we need to be taking some time—rather than waiting till the last minute and trying to push through legislation—to really look at mental health and mental illness and figure out how to best service those people who are suffering from mental health issues or are being touched by them with a family member or friend. Maybe something we could look at in the future—hopefully, not in the too-distant future—is mental health supports and how we adequately support people.

The member from Huron-Bruce touched on the cost to the health care system of dealing with mental health. It is a great cost, but it's not just to the health care system. There's a cost to policing, there's a cost to the corrections system, because far too often what we find is that people who have mental illness are picked up by the police, they're taken through the court system, they're put into a corrections facility, which is not necessarily where they

need to be, and then they are put into a situation and a corrections facility that is not ideal for someone who has mental health issues.

So I think something else that we need to be looking at is the way that people view mental health issues, the way that we address mental health issues and the supports, so that we don't have the extra costs to the health care system, to policing and to the corrections system.

I believe that if there were the proper community supports—I'm not saying anything against the community supports we have now, but they need the tools and the funding to be able to properly address the mental health issues. If that was to happen, I think we wouldn't be looking at a last-minute push-through of legislation; we would be dealing with the bigger picture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 122 today. I was surprised that the members from the government side weren't speaking to it, which resulted in my delay in getting up.

I'm going to speak for both sides on this for the time being. I do applaud the government for bringing forth the legislation to make changes to allow for people who have been in long-term mental health facilities to have a hearing before the Consent and Capacity Board, which has to determine whether or not they can be reintegrated into society. If they can, they must be. However, I also have to agree with my colleagues from the third party and my own colleagues that it has certainly been a long time coming.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change gets himself in a knot sometimes. Whenever people are critical of the government, he feels he has to jump right out and defend everything they do. Well, Speaker, they are not perfect, and they could have moved more quickly on this.

As my colleague from Welland has said, six years ago there was a select committee on mental health that made numerous recommendations to the government on dealing with people suffering from mental health issues, and it has just taken forever for them to act on them.

In the big picture, there is no question that mental health gets nowhere near the attention it deserves. Whether it's an issue that people fear—they don't want to talk about it. They don't want to recognize that they know people who are dealing with mental health issues. Or maybe they fear that they could be the next one in line, because there is no assurance that any one of us is immune to being stricken with a mental health issue. It is a delicate subject, and people don't like to talk about it.

I probably wouldn't feel like talking about it from this perspective a whole lot myself, but I do have a personal story to tell. I probably would not have felt as comfortable if my aunt, at the age of 97, hadn't died earlier this year, because I know she would not have wanted me to talk about this.

We've come a long way in how we deal with mental health issues, but we still have a long way to go, because

the stigmatization is still there. Do you really think that anybody wants to go into a place looking for work, looking for a job at a new place, and tell people that they may have been treated for a mental health issue? Do you think that the person on the other side of the table is going to react the same as if that disclosure never came? We know differently.

There are people who have been tremendously courageous and have helped people talk about these issues. I think of one person, the former Toronto Maple Leafs player Ron Ellis, who has travelled all around this country talking about his own battle with severe depression and how he fought it and battled it all of his life—dealt with it as a professional hockey player and after his retirement from the game as well. All of those kinds of stories I do believe help in people getting beyond that stigmatization of mental illness.

But let me tell you a little history—I can't believe how fast that clock seems to move. My grandmother suffered from increasingly difficult bouts of postpartum depression after each one of her children. There was more to it, I'm sure, than postpartum depression, because she took longer to come out of it and it lasted longer. My father was the youngest child, born in 1922.

In 1929, after some hospitalizations, my grandmother went into what I think was called the Kingston hospital for the mentally insane at that time, for the last time. She came out, not because of a hearing before the Consent and Capacity Board but in a body bag in 1961, when she passed away. So from 1929 to 1961, she never left the psychiatric hospital in Kingston—Kingston or Brockville. I never ever got a chance to see her. I was born in 1957. I know my dad went down to see her many times and my oldest sisters, I know, may have gone to see her.

It's thinking about how the stigmatization affects people. The way of treating it at those times—and you know what? It's not just the system. Possibly her own family didn't know how to deal with it. The physicians of the day didn't know how to deal with it, had no answers for it. So she was locked up and she would have been perpetually drugged, kept in a state of some kind of a stupor so that they're easier to manage, and slowly but surely, as she aged and deteriorated, she passed away. Today that wouldn't happen. We have come a long way. But we still have these stigmatizations about mental illness.

When I say I wouldn't have spoken about this if my aunt were still living, she would have, I know, been very uncomfortable about me talking about her mother in this way. She would have grown up through that whole period understanding how the tongues would have wagged in the hometown about her mother, my dad's mother, and how something wasn't right with her, and how they put her away. She was put away, never to be freed again. A life sentence, so to speak, not because she committed any kind of a crime, but because she suffered from a mental illness.

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Do you think that never had an effect on my aunt's life, or my father's life or their other siblings, as they

grew up? Well, my father battled depression too. He held the same job that I hold here. Do you think he could ever talk about it in those days? Do you think he could ever publicly speak about his battle with depression, living in the Ontario of the 1950s, '60s and '70s? Do you think he would have ever been re-elected as a member of this Legislature in those days if he had talked about fighting and dealing with depression on a daily basis? Most likely not.

Today it's a different story. That is a positive change that has taken years and years, a generational change and attitudinal change not only of people being more compassionate to the trials and tribulations of others, but also being more educated that these things exist and, as I say, none of us is immune to it.

When people talk about this, because the reality is that mental illness has a hereditary aspect to it, I always say that fortunately I have not had to deal with mental illness or depression—yet. I always add that caveat because, as I say, none of us is immune to it. We could all be stricken with it at some point in our lives. So I think it's important for all of us to understand, when we're dealing with issues of mental illness, and particularly those people who suffer from it, that we deal with it in the most compassionate way possible.

There are some positive changes in this bill, but it is not going to be easy. It's not a simple matter to reintegrate people into society. Whether they've been incarcerated or held in a facility for mental health reasons, it will be a challenging exercise. Yet, the Consent and Capacity Board, which spent over \$6 million last year, has had its budget cut. How are we supposed to be able to accomplish all of these things in the face of further budget cuts? We have to do a whole lot more to deal with people and help people who deal with mental illnesses, but we can't do it when the budget this government brings forth is continually cutting the funding for those services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thank the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for sharing that story with us. You know, as somebody who practised nursing for many years and had opportunities sometimes to actually work on a mental health unit, it's true that in the early days people were put away, and many of them ended up spending many, many years there, even though they could potentially have been integrated back into the community. But the community services weren't available; there weren't enough beds in acute-care settings. But you know, we've almost moved to the opposite now, where they're closing mental health beds all across this province.

In my own riding, we've lost two units of mental health beds. We have one unit now and no children's mental health beds in the Niagara region. They have to go to Hamilton for any in-patient care. Unfortunately, even though those beds have closed, those ending dollars have not been reinvested in the community.

Since I spoke to this bill, I think it was last week, I have had two or three calls from community agencies—family health teams and community health centres—saying, “What you said is exactly right, and we want to set up meetings with you to talk about how we can move forward. People who used to be in a hospital bed in our communities don’t have access to services in the community.” It may be because they don’t have the transportation to get where the services are provided, or it may just be because there are so many people with those needs, particularly with the poverty issues today, that they’re just not able to get the services they need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I’m pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill 122. Basically, we’ve heard from the courts that we need to be mindful about protecting the rights of patients who are detained involuntarily in our mental health facilities, and we’ve had to move forward as quickly and efficiently as possible to come forward with some amendments.

The government is amending the Mental Health Act in response to the Ontario Court of Appeal decision. What was found was that the provision in the MHA for long-term involuntary patients violated section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What we are doing is putting amendments in place by December 22 to make sure that we are taking care of a very challenging and compelling situation.

When people are hit with the terrible and often really difficult situation of having to deal with a loved one who is suffering from mental health issues, and when they are concerned about their safety and when they are concerned about the safety of the family and society at large, people are placed in very, very difficult situations. They have to make hard choices, and there are times in life when governments and the health sector actually have to step in and make sure that we are doing the right thing.

There are times when people themselves who are involved in these situations are too emotionally tied with what is happening. That’s what these amendments are about: They are trying to ensure that we are helping the families go through and navigate through the system during difficult times.

They are also trying to ensure that we are doing the right thing, that we are respecting a person’s rights and freedoms, but that we are also doing regular check-ins. That’s what these amendments do. They bring about a system so that we are ensuring that no one is kept beyond their will and in a situation that they shouldn’t be kept in for too long a period of time.

I support Bill 122. I think it is the right thing to do, and I’m pleased to stand up and speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It’s my pleasure to be able to enter debate in the questions and comments section for

Bill 122 of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

If I may, as I begin my remarks in my two-minute response, congratulate him for taking the time and having the courage to discuss the mental illness that his family has faced. I think it is stories like his—from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who talked about his father, a former member in this esteemed chamber—that help people, whether in Ontario or the rest of Canada, come to grips with the fact that many Canadians, many Ontarians do indeed face mental illness in their families, or themselves.

When we look around this great province, we have seen many strides take place of greater awareness so that we have a deeper understanding of what people go through and particularly how to treat them.

For the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, it took a great deal of courage to talk about his experience on the floor of this assembly, as he spoke I think very emotionally, very passionately and very clearly about the need for proper supports in this province. I of course will join him, as well as the rest of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, in supporting Bill 122. As you know, it is as a result of a Court of Appeal decision that we must become compliant in the province of Ontario with this, and that is what this bill pertains to.

I will have an opportunity later to discuss the bill as a whole. But for my response, I just wanted to congratulate my colleague for taking the time to share a little bit more about him and his family and his father, who was a great Ontarian, who served this Legislature with distinction and great purpose, and to share that with all of us, so that we know that we all may face the same issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to stand in the House and follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and his comments on Bill 122, and specifically his comments regarding his family.

One of the strengths of this House is when we relate our personal experiences and our family experiences and our work experiences to how it actually impacts the greater public and the greater good. The member did that very courageously, and I think that anyone who listened to those remarks learned a great deal. I commend him for that.

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It leaves the one issue that he also touched on: The issue of mental health is much greater than what this bill touches. This bill was forced. We are forced to come to grips with this issue because of the court ruling, and those in the NDP caucus are also going to fully support this. The issue is that it comes at such a late date and it’s so rushed. We should have been able, as legislators, to take a lot longer look at the whole mental health regime, to see how we can improve the lives of the people afflicted with this silent, invisible ailment. Because if we had taken that time, as opposed to just trying to fix the

problem, we could have made a much bigger difference in the lives of not only the people but their families. So if there's one huge criticism, Speaker, it's actually that this government didn't plan it out well enough so that we could have had a fulsome debate on the whole system. It needs to be done, but it is a Band-Aid on a much larger issue, and I think that's what we need to focus on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Welland, Halton, Nepean–Carleton and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments as well.

I probably didn't spend a lot of time talking about the bill, but the bill itself is also part of what—we are always looking for changes in how we might improve the lives of people in the province of Ontario. Specifically, when we look at the people who are suffering from mental illness, the hope is that we view mental illness—certainly some day and maybe sooner than later—not unlike the issue of a chronic illness of a physical kind, where we have treatment, we have success in showing how it works and we don't shunt that person to the side because the illness that they suffer from is one that primarily affects the brain but of course affects their whole lives as opposed to affecting an organ, a joint or a physical part of the body, so that they have the same opportunities to reach their potential here as someone who would have a disability of some other nature. For so long, we have thought of taking people who have suffered from mental illness and just putting them into a corner, ignoring or forgetting that they are even there and that they're part of our society.

This bill is going to help change that. There are a lot more positive things that can be done. When we really reach the point where we should be at is when we don't just say it but actually walk the walk and treat people with a mental illness as any other illness, one that we can cure, if we have the means, but that we can certainly treat like any other illness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a great privilege for me as the MPP for London West to rise today to join the debate on Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996. We have been speaking about this bill over the last couple of weeks, but the reason we are addressing this bill now is because the government has discovered that it needs to respond to a court decision that was made almost a full year ago, on December 23, 2014. That ruling from the Ontario Court of Appeal declared that certain sections of the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act were actually unconstitutional. These sections violated citizens' charter rights to life, liberty and security of the person because they allowed for the indefinite and involuntary committal of people with serious mental health illnesses.

Now, the Charter of Rights requires that these rights can only be removed if the principles of fundamental

justice are followed. The current provisions of the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act do not adhere to principles of fundamental justice, which is why these amendments have been brought forward.

The government was given one year by the Court of Appeal to fix the problem, to bring these two pieces of legislation into line with the Charter of Rights.

Speaker, here we are today watching as the clock counts down to December 23, trying to push this bill through second reading, through committee hearings, through third reading and through royal assent. If we don't get this done before December 10, which is the final day of sittings for this Legislature, then the sections of the act that have been deemed to violate the charter will become automatically invalid. That will mean that approximately 330 people with serious mental illnesses who are currently being held involuntarily will have the right to walk away without being able to access the treatment that we know could benefit them enormously.

Now, some might ask why the government waited nine months after the court's ruling to introduce this bill, and that's a very good question. Some might also ask why the government has allowed the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health—which many MPPs have spoken about when they've talked during this debate on Bill 122—to languish on the shelf for six years, because that committee report actually included a recommendation that would have avoided this last-minute scramble to deal with the involuntary committal of people with serious mental health illnesses.

That report included recommendation 21. It recommended that "the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should create a task force, incorporating adequate representation from, among others, mental health clients and their caregivers as well as mental health law experts, to investigate and propose changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and policy pertaining to involuntary admission and treatment.... This task force should report back to the ministry within one year of the adoption of this report by the Legislative Assembly."

That report was brought to the Legislative Assembly in 2010, and here we are today in 2015 scrambling to get this legislation pushed through.

Speaker, when I was first elected, about two and a half years ago, I served as the NDP's corrections critic. I heard daily about the crisis of mental health within the correctional system. I was particularly interested in the forensic mental health system in which people are found not criminally responsible and, in a form of involuntary committal, are sent to a high-security psychiatric institution.

I had the opportunity to meet and talk with one of my constituents, Brett Batten, who has been very open, very honest, about his experiences in the forensic mental health system. He has become a very well-known advocate and champion of mental health issues in my community.

I wanted to share with you some of Brett's thoughts about the mental health system and about what we really need to be dealing with when we're talking about mental

health, rather than this sort of last-minute, finger-in-the-dike kind of approach to fix this problem in the legislation. Brett writes: "I am the million-dollar man. I have spent three years in correctional facilities, two years hospitalized and five years monitored in the community. The five years I spent incarcerated amount to approximately \$550,000, and that gets added to the cost of my community treatment," adding up to over \$1 million, Speaker.

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He writes: "In my estimation, it would have been cheaper to have a worker follow me from a young age"—when Brett had his first mental health incident—"and it would have been advantageous for me and the system to have had intervention before I cost over \$300/day. A mental health worker paid \$40,000/year could have spent over 13 years at my side daily or 26 years seeing me for four hours a day.... [I]f there was one person who was assigned to my mental health journey, I may have avoided the courts. I didn't receive the intensive treatment I required until I was in my 30s, and there were periods when I was not in receipt of any treatment or oversight."

"I sometimes wonder, if that time and money was spent when I was young, if I would have avoided everything."

So, Speaker, there are many, many challenges in our mental health system that need to be addressed, and primary among those are issues around early intervention. I'm also now serving as critic for training, colleges and universities, and certainly, we are hearing more and more about the mental health crisis among our young people, among students who are attending our post-secondary institutions.

Just last week, there was a story in the Western News, which is the newspaper of Western's campus. It highlighted some of the growing mental health challenges on the university campus. The director of Western's Campus Community Police Services said that officers are dealing with more and more mental-health-related incidents. He actually said that about half of all the serious incidents handled by the campus police involve some kind of mental health problem.

He noted that campus police officers, like community police officers, are able to apprehend an individual when that person is considered a risk to themselves or a risk or a threat to others. This is what we're talking about today, the involuntary committal. This is what's known, for a 72-hour admission, as a form 1 apprehension. We learned last week from Western that in September 2015, police were involved in 10 form 1 apprehensions of students, this involuntary committal of a student for a 72-hour period, but that compares to three the previous September.

We also know that there has been a steady increase in the proportion of mental health cases that make up the students who visit student mental health services every year. In 2013, there were just under 9,000 mental health cases. That increased to almost 10,000 in 2014, and there

are more than 11,000—even to this point—in 2015, and we've still got several months to go.

Speaker, mental health is a significant issue for our correctional system and, as I've mentioned, a significant issue for our young people. We need to do so much more to address the challenges and ensure that people are getting the treatment that they need, rather than this Band-Aid approach which we're offering in Bill 122. It's great that we're talking about mental health, but now it's time to come to the table and bring some real solutions that are going to address the real challenges that people are facing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, in my two minutes, let me just lay out the structure of the legislation. In the existing legislation, which is in effect until December, a person could be involuntarily committed for up to six months through a series of certificates, and then they could also be detained after that.

But what the court found was that the detention after the initial six months—there was no provision, if you will, to tailor the detention specific to the patient's needs. What this legislation does is, it says that if someone is going to be detained for more than six months, that detention beyond the initial six months has to be tailor-made, if you will, or suited to the particular patient. That is progress, and that tailoring of the terms of the detention after the initial six months is designed so that the patient detained gets the very best of care specific to their needs. That is a big step forward. That's good for the patient; that's good for the patient's family; that's good for society because we are ensuring that it's not just a matter anymore of detaining someone for six months and then renewing the detention, and they're just in the facility, in a bed, or whatever the facility is. That detention beyond the six months has to be in conjunction with the advice of psychiatrists and other health care professionals, tailor-made to the particular circumstances of the patient. That's the gist of this legislation. It's a good piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to make comment on my colleague from London West, who I sit on another select committee with. We are speaking today on mental health. We touched upon the previous select committee, many of us—and I will be later also—on mental health and addictions. I realize this act is coming in. We all supported it. It's Bill 122. It is court-mandated to bring this act in. So, of course, we're in favour of it.

As the member from London West accurately said in her comments, if they had looked at the recommendations from the select committee and followed through on many of them—hopefully, all of them, but even many of them—this would have already been addressed, because that is one of the recommendations. Now the court has mandated the government to bring this in by December 23, I believe it is. So, of course, we're in favour of it, but

I think this opens up an opportunity for many of the speakers that I've listened to this afternoon, and will continue to do, to do more.

I think that's collectively what occurred for 18 months in the select committee, but also what we heard when we were sitting on our select committee on sexual harassment and violence against women and men. There's a lot that can be done. There's a lot of good recommendations that we're going to be tabling in the next few weeks here in that committee. Again, select committees were brought up for a reason, specific topics. This was brought up by Christine Elliott—the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions—who spearheaded this. The member from Dufferin—Caledon sat with her on that committee. We made good recommendations. We only see one of them here. We were hoping for the opportunity in committee that some more recommendations could be brought forward.

I thank the member from London West for her contribution to this debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to once again rise to speak to Bill 122. I just want to touch on some of the things that the member from London West touched on. They were things I had brought up in my comments; and they're very important, so I'm glad she brought them up again. That is the fact that we often find those who have been touched with mental health issues enter into our correctional facilities. That's not necessarily where they need to be, and it's not necessarily the ideal situation for them or for the people that are charged with their care, the corrections officers. They often don't have the supports within these facilities—the mental health supports—to help these people. So we often find that the behaviour of these particular people escalates within the facility, which means they're now in more trouble and they're going to stay in that particular system longer. They could also be a danger not only to themselves but to those around them.

So I think when the member from London West brought up the fact that we need to look at the determining factors for some mental health illness, I mean, there's a wealth of causes. It could be that someone is from a low-income family. It puts pressure on the family. We have families where parents are going out and having to work two or three jobs in order to put food on the table for the kids. That can put stress on the adults in the household, but it also can for the children in household. We need to make sure we look at all the factors that can contribute to someone suffering from mental illness and make sure that they have the supports in place out in the community so they're not entering—formally entering—the health system through our hospitals, so that they're not entering into being touched by police or entering into our correctional facilities when, really, the community supports should be there in place to help them through the tough time that they're facing, to help get them through it.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to rise and join the discussion today on amending the Mental Health Act. This is a very important issue in my community of Kitchener Centre and, of course, right across the province of Ontario. The reason why we are looking at amending the Mental Health Act is in response to a decision by the Ontario Court of Appeal. That court found that the provision for long-term, involuntary patients is in violation of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Specifically, the court said that there needs to be a mechanism for patients who are detained for six months or more, that they should have the right to ask for a tribunal to review their case.

We do need to advance this by December 22 of this year or there will not be a legislative authority to keep involuntary patients in treatment. Having those patients released into the community does pose a potential risk for the safety and well-being of those patients and, really, for the community at large. So the bill, if it's passed, is going to make it possible to detain a patient on a new form called the certificate of continuation. This is going to allow for long-term, involuntary patients to be kept for a further three-month period. This is going to be very similar, Mr. Speaker, to the current certificates that we do have with the Mental Health Act.

The amendments are also going to allow doctors and nurse practitioners to sit on these panels, and that's going to free up psychiatrists to address more complex hearings that may arise because of this.

It's very encouraging to see a more open dialogue on the issue of mental health. I was pleased to hear what some of my colleagues were saying about this today, and I commend them for sharing their information. These amendments to the Mental Health Act are necessary, and they deserve our support. And I do want to commend all of the people in my riding of Kitchener Centre who are working in the field of mental health. I commend them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, the member from Windsor West and the member from Kitchener Centre for their comments on my remarks.

I wanted to begin where the member from Kitchener Centre left off. She referred to the court decision. Really, that decision reflects something of a sea change in terms of the government's responsibility to the treatment of people with very serious mental illnesses. In the decision of the court, the justice wrote that "underlying the ... decision is an important shift away from traditional views of mental health institutions as warehouses designed to protect society from permanently afflicted individuals, and towards a view of these institutions as places of recovery designed to facilitate the reintegration of patients into society." Certainly, Speaker, this is what we want.

In my comments, I talked about the experience of Brett Batten, who ended up, eventually, in a forensic institution, but he said that was the best worst thing that could have happened to him because it took so many years before he finally was found not criminally responsible, before he finally got into a system where he was—the law required him to get the treatment that he needed.

We have an obligation to ensure that everyone in our society, regardless of whether they have a physical illness or a mental health illness, gets the treatment that they deserve.

Speaker, I do want to point out that the member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock referenced the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. There is an opportunity for the government to move immediately to implement those recommendations by passing Bill 95, the private member's bill of the member for London—Fanshawe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I get a little bit more time to speak on Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act. We've debated this quite a bit. Certainly we're getting all-party agreement that this has to be done; it's been court-mandated. I know that the PC health critic from Elgin—Middlesex—London certainly agrees—he's our critic on this file—that it's moving in right direction.

I know we had some concerns on the necessary changes about the months to consult with the hospital-based psychiatrists who manage the treatment of patients. We're concerned a little bit about how much the government actually sought, or cared to seek, the input of the medical community. But if we're moving this to committee quickly, which it seems like we will, we can certainly have a chance to hear from them. Front-line experts certainly are invaluable for their input.

With Bill 122, the proposal is to make some key amendments to the Mental Health Act to provide the Consent and Capacity Board with new order-making powers on confirming a patient certificate of continuation. A subsequent amendment must also be made to the Health Care Consent Act, 1996—a procedural rule that applied to hearings of an application.

When I spoke earlier, and many people have referenced it too—the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions had made 23 recommendations, which I have spoken about for years. It was made six years ago, I believe. My colleague from Dufferin—Caledon, is that correct, six years? I see her nodding her head, yes. She sat on that committee, as well as Christine Elliott, who spearheaded having a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

They were 18 months, hearing deputations from people. We're talking a very sensitive issue—it's very difficult for people to come forward to make deputations—and they heard a lot of good recommendations.

When I say we're all in agreement on that, if the government had actually brought in the recommendations that were in the select committee report—I'm not using a prop; I'm just holding up the report for a minute—we actually wouldn't need this specific piece of legislation. Having said that, we have it in front of us, and we're in agreement and have the opportunity to go to committee. I know that when the member from Dufferin—Caledon spoke to this bill, she brought up a great idea, which I fully endorse: Let's look at making at least some of these recommendations, made from 18 months of public consultations—they're ready to go—part of Bill 122.

The member from London West spoke about her background when she was corrections services critic. She told a very eloquent story about how we could have actually helped a gentleman earlier, saved a lot of money and made society much more responsible in this situation, but it would have been better for society as a whole. That is what we, as legislators, should be doing.

The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke eloquently told his family story. Times have changed greatly—I thank God for that—since the time he told what took place in his family with mental illness. But we do have a long way to go, and we need to do a lot better; I can't tell you the number of times I have said that, both in my riding and here.

There's a quote I am going to use that speaks volumes about mental health situations: "Pain is weakness leaving the body." It's written in white Impact font on a black background wrapped by a rectangular box, shared across social media like Pinterest and Instagram. So it might be true, right? Well, what does that say about people's preconceived notions? When someone is struggling with mental health issues, is that what we are supposed to say: "Stop being so weak. Just suck it up."

In today's world, that's what we see in social media and what goes on there. It's no wonder that mental health cases are so negatively perceived. We need to have a more meaningful conversation about mental health policies if people feel they are going to be judged.

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We can go through statistics. The Mental Health Commission of Canada estimates that mental illness costs employers \$20 billion a year. Mental health problems account for one in three workplace disability claims, contributing to absenteeism and lack of productivity. The commission stresses just how prevalent mental illness is across any profession. We've heard, for example, that first responders have high rates of post-traumatic stress, the oil and gas sector has a high incidence of substance abuse, and the list can go on and on.

The Leader of the Opposition, the member from Simcoe North, has said on several occasions that 40% of OPP calls last year were related to mental health. Officers who were dispatched often waited six to seven hours for a mental health worker.

In my own area, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association does great work for my constituents. It serves about 15,000

people every year and is certainly promoting and supporting mental health recovery and wellness through working with families and patients and community partners. There's still such a call for more that needs to be done. There was a 44% reduction for housing opportunities, which impacts both the education and health promotion programs.

If you look at my latest LHIN studies that were done, I have a higher proportion of people in need of mental health services in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—but in the Central East LHIN also. It's a struggle to find appropriate care for loved ones.

We need to revisit how mental health care is delivered. We need to revisit it in legislation.

We have the recommendations from the select committee, and as I said, this is one piece of it. Some members of the select committee from the government side are actually cabinet ministers now, so they know first-hand—18 months is pretty gruelling, to hear from the people and the experiences they've had, and the recommendations that were unanimously brought forward.

A few recommendations that kind of fit the legal part of this area, that were in the select committee's recommendations: "The services of court mental health workers should be made widely available across all regions of Ontario, in order to divert more individuals with a mental illness or addiction out of the justice system and into appropriate mental health and addictions services and supports."

Another recommendation: "Additional mental health, drug treatment, and youth mental health courts should be created across all regions of Ontario, to provide more appropriate services for individuals with a mental illness or addiction." This is very much a struggle in rural Ontario, too.

Another one—there are 23; I won't read them all, nor do I have time, but you're getting the idea of the types of recommendations: "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should create a task force, incorporating adequate representation from, among others, mental health clients and their caregivers as well as mental health law experts, to investigate and propose changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and policy pertaining to involuntary admission and treatment. The changes should ensure that involuntary admission criteria include serious harms that are not merely physical, and that involuntary admission entails treatment. This task force should report back to the ministry within one year of the adoption of this report by the Legislative Assembly."

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I see.

Ms. Laurie Scott: "I see," said the member from Dufferin–Caledon as she was highlighting that significant recommendation.

As I said, if the government had listened—we're still hopeful that they will listen to more of the recommendations that are brought forward from the select committee—we would have better mental health care in the province of Ontario, better identification, and be helping

not just the OPP and the front-line workers, but getting better care so it's not as costly to society, not just financially—but also the human cost of some tragic events that occur with mental health.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just about to wrap up, but I just want to quickly say that I met with Colleges Ontario, who are more than happy to help people with disabilities, and some will be in mental health, to get post-secondary education, because they are valuable assets to those in society and there are job opportunities waiting. So I'm a putting a plug in for the ministry to look at that in the long run, too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to offer some thoughts on the comments from the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. She spent quite a bit of time during her remarks talking about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and I wanted to remind MPPs over on the government side that there is an easy way that the rest of the recommendations from that select committee can be addressed and incorporated into the mental health system in this province, and that is to pass Bill 95. This was a private member's bill that was brought forward by my colleague the member for London–Fanshawe. It is called the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act. What this bill does, quite simply, is implement all 23 of those recommendations that were included in that select committee report.

As the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock pointed out, one of those recommendations, the recommendation to create a task force to study the issue of involuntary committal, could have prevented this last-minute scramble that we find ourselves in as the government rushes to try to respond to a court ruling a year ago to do something about patients who have very serious mental health illnesses and who are being held involuntarily for periods longer than six months.

Certainly, Speaker, as the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock pointed out, we have a crisis in mental health, and it's going to take more than Bill 122 to deal with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and, of course, the member from London West. I believe, like many people in this room, that this is an important issue and we need to move it along. I have had a couple of minutes to speak on the issue, and I just hope we continue the conversation and move it along as fast as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise and add some comments on the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. The member and I are currently sitting on another select committee, and I have learned to see the value of the work that select committees do and can

accomplish in our legislative process. As we know, there are lots of committees and lots of debates that are very partisan in nature. Select committees, by their very formation, tend not to be that way. So it has been a real pleasure to sit with her on the current select committee. But the one related to mental health and addictions really is opening up an opportunity for us to improve Bill 122. There are very specific recommendations that I think could easily be incorporated into Bill 122 to make this bill better. If, first and foremost, what we're here for is to improve existing legislation so that the people of Ontario are better served by our time as legislators, take the work that has already happened with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. While the report is about four or five years old, it is by no means dated. There is a lot of information that can be gleaned and pulled from it that would improve Bill 122, much of which my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock raised in her debate.

I'm pleased, actually, that we have an opportunity once again through debate to talk about the mental health and addictions sector in Ontario. It's one in dire need of improvement, and any opportunity where we can do that, we have an obligation to.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for her comments on this bill.

Now, when we go back to this select committee report, the number 2 recommendation was that we should ensure that there was a basket of core institutional, residential and community services available in every region for everyone. Unfortunately, this core basket of services doesn't work for everyone and, in fact, 40% of people who are diagnosed with major depression do not respond to antidepressants, costing the system about \$19,000 per patient, per year.

Now there are some new treatments actually available in this province, and one of them is at St. Joe's in Hamilton. Doctors are turning to brain stimulation therapy. It's non-invasive. It uses electromagnetic energy to treat severe depression. It looks promising. In a study of about 50 depressed people who had failed trials with any number of antidepressants, almost 30% showed a full response to this treatment, and the cost of the treatment is only a third of what it costs to treat people who aren't responding to antidepressants.

Dr. Gary Hasey is the director of the TMS lab at St. Joe's. Unfortunately, there's no funding for this. Instead of taking those \$20,000 a year that are not effective to treating people's major depression and diverting those dollars over to this program that is actually showing some really good results—I think the government, as part of this whole look at mental health, needs to investigate some of these new treatments that are out there and are effective for patients and, ultimately, will impact their families as well, if people can get some really good treatment for depression.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for final comments.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member from London West, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon and the member from Welland, who is also a nurse. It's good that we have, I think, about five nurses in the Legislature, as I look across at the member from Scarborough.

I think that on issues related to health care in mental health today we can add some input from experiences in the past, but also the member from Welland mentioned the core basket of services that I mentioned before, and she mentioned is available in every region of the province, to identify the gaps and the duplications so there is actually sufficient capacity to care for clients. She mentioned some new technologies—absolutely. There is research being done all the time, and governments traditionally—it doesn't matter maybe what government is in—tend to lag behind a bit of the research and new, innovative technologies. I say we can't afford to lag behind any more.

We're talking about Bill 122 today. We're in agreement. It's court-mandated; it has to be done. So we need to get it done, but it doesn't stop us from, in committee—again, I'll put a plug for bringing in more of the recommendations from the select committee that were brought forward, that were from public hearings, because there was all-party agreement on those recommendations and they are spoken of in very broad and caring terms that can encompass the new research that's out there, the laws that need to be made. They would be very quick to be adapted.

So, money better spent in health care and mental health and addictions is certainly a positive step forward. While we support this bill, we want more to be done. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wanted to participate in this debate because this is somewhat of an issue that our family has had to deal with over the years. I know a number of my friends and family who have had to deal with similar issues when it comes to a person who was incapacitated because of some psychotic episode, that they're a danger to themselves or a danger to society or others and have to be committed under form 1, 2, 3 or 4 at an institution.

My sister Louise is now deceased. She died of cancer when she was 61 years old, a couple of years ago, from breast cancer. I miss her terribly. She, from a very early age, developed schizophrenia. We as a family really didn't know what that was all about when it happened. My sister would do odd things when she was 14 and 15 years old; she was the older sister. She would run the same song over and over and over again. You know, being those days—this is back in the late 1960s, very early 1970s—we didn't know a lot about mental health.

We just thought that Louise was Louise, doing odd things. She would do things all of a sudden. We had a one-floor house and she would, all of a sudden, start running from one spot of the house to another spot, stop, run back again, stop, run back to the same spot, and would continually do that. But she was never a danger to herself. It was just odd things she was doing when she was younger—14, 15, 16.

Eventually, she grew up. Like any young person, after grade 13 she decided to pursue an education at university. She went to Laurentian University in Sudbury and took translation. She was, obviously, fluent in French and English, but she also wanted to learn Russian at the time, because it was kind of the thing to do and she wanted to be a translator. Louise had very good marks. She was a very, very intelligent young woman at the time and a very intelligent sister when she got older, too.

But it didn't work. When she got into university, the stress of the studies made her break down, to where it was no longer just running from spot to spot; it was no longer just listening to the same song. It was not showing up to classes for periods of time and losing contact with her. We don't know what was going on, because we were living in Timmins and she was down in Sudbury. Back then, a 19-year-old girl in Sudbury, out on her own, who knows what she's doing? You don't want to pry to the point of depriving her of her privacy and her independence, being the oldest one in the family to move away.

My parents would talk about it. I remember going down to visit my sister, and at the time she would have been about 19 and I would have been about 15 or so. I got on a bus and went down there to see her because I'd hear in the family—there had been some discussions. When I got down I didn't really know what was going on except that Louise was doing some really strange things, but I never felt there was a danger to her; it was just like there was something odd.

Then she dropped out of university and she ended up going to Ottawa, where she had severe psychotic episodes that were suicidal. My brother Claude, who still lives in Ottawa, was the one who dealt with it because he was the only family member, obviously, in Ottawa. We were only three children in our family. Mom and Dad lived in Timmins; I lived in Timmins; Claude was in Ottawa and Louise was there. Claude started dealing with Louise and he would call my parents and he would call me, and he said, "Jesus, a strange thing happened," and he'd tell the story. The story was really bizarre and it would be really dark and, like, what the hell was that all about? Pardon the language.

Until, finally, she started trying to harm herself. He, unfortunately, found her in a couple of these episodes. It wasn't a pretty sight; I'll just leave it at that. Well, you know, what happened was that Mom and Dad went down to Ottawa and, eventually, the doctors, the psychiatrists there at whatever institution, form 1-ed her and, eventually, she was form 4-ed. She ended up in North Bay for a

long period of time. She was there probably—and my memory may not serve me well—well over a year.

Louise fought to get out every occasion she had. I would go to visit her at that time—by that time I was married. My wife, Murielle, and I drove down a couple of times; Mom and Dad did; my brother Claude did. She would be like, "I got to get out of here." She had a friend Wanda, the wicked witch of north, and she would tell us that Wanda was going to cure her, but you always felt that she wasn't safe.

The dilemma we had in the family—this is what I want to bring to this debate—is that if we had the ability, we probably would have left her there forever, only because we didn't know what to do. There wasn't proper community support. As a family, we were ill-equipped to understand how to deal with a sister or a daughter who was a wonderful human being, was quite intelligent, but who had psychotic episodes within her schizophrenia. And what do you do? On the one hand, you want to protect and make sure your sister doesn't do harm to herself—it was never harm to others; it was harm to herself. We probably would have opted to leave her there, because that was a safe thing to do. But thank God, at the time, the guy who was her psychiatrist in North Bay explained to the family that this is not the way that Louise has got to be dealt with. At one point, she's got to be reintegrated back into the community.

1710

That's where the Canadian Mental Health Association came into play. I've got to say that my praises go out to Judy Shanks, the then-director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and the current mental health association, under different management. But, still, Louise was a resident—well, she lived in a group home for a long time, but she ended up having her own apartment for the last six or seven years of her life. The Canadian Mental Health Association, as far as the services they provided her in the community, helped us understand as a family how to deal with a sister who was schizophrenic, and who at times had psychotic episodes; they became less and less as she got older. I personally had to form-1 her a couple of times because I thought she was a danger to herself. Thank God, we had good support and we were able to deal with getting Louise back into the community in a way that she was safe.

But here's the kicker: Louise had a family that was involved in her care. The one thing that I learned through this entire process is that a lot of these individuals—young men and women and older men and women who suffer psychotic episodes or have schizophrenia or other mental health diseases—are on their own. In my constituency office, just like all of ours—I'm sure we all have them in our constit offices. We have people who the only family they have—one member got up here today who talked about a particular individual in her constituency office who would come in every now and then; you almost became like the surrogate parents. We have those in Kapuskasing. We have those in Timmins. But the observation I make is that they don't have family. What happens to them if they end up inside an

institution? They could end up there forever. That's what the courts were trying to speak to.

I understand it's a really tough issue because as a family we fought with it within ourselves: Do we allow Louise to continue to be institutionalized or do we take her out? Eventually, we opted to take her out, and that was the right thing to do in the longer term. But the courts have decided that you have to have a process that just doesn't lock and say, "Throw away the key"; you have to have an ability to be able to review what the person's condition is and to make sure that you're able to ensure that if the person is released, they have the type of supports they need and they're going to be able to survive in the community.

The unfortunate part about where we find ourselves today is that the government knew about this last year when the court made the decision, and instead of handling the legislation in a timely way, we find ourselves at the end of the process with barely three weeks of session left. The government is coming to us and saying, "You have to deal with this." Well, you know, as New Democrats, we're going to deal with it. We're going to obviously allow this bill to go forward because it must do so, or otherwise the rest of the current legislation is going to be withdrawn, and then where are we going to be at?

I just say to the government across the way: Where have you been for the last 10 months? It's not as if the House leader of the opposition or the House leader of the Conservatives or the New Democrats said, "Don't bring this bill forward. We're going to have a great big filibuster." I wanted to legitimately speak to this bill, because I lived the experience with Louise. I think it's important that we put on the record that we understand why the legislation was the way it was: because at that time, the legislation was drafted in a way that reflected the then-understanding of mental health in our society at the time.

But our change in understanding mental health and how we deal with it today is much different than then, and we need to be able to move to a system that ensures that individuals' rights are protected under the charter and that, at the same time, they're protected when it comes to our own ability to make sure that they're safe and come to no harm—or somebody else they may be in contact with.

I wish I had more time. I wanted to talk a little bit about the Consent and Capacity Board and nurse practitioners, because my daughter works at the institution in Whitby that actually deals with this very issue, as a nurse practitioner. She's going to be one of the people who will probably have to deal with this, so I wanted to get that on the record, but I ran out of time. Twenty minutes, Speaker—hardly enough time to say what you have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents of Cambridge to add my comments on their behalf to debate in the House. With

my past experience as a nurse, I've dealt with many, many different types of patients, especially those in the emergency department. I know when the member from Timmins–James Bay was talking about his scenario and those that he has walked beside who suffer from mental illness, I can certainly relate to that in my own career as a nurse.

What I wanted to focus on today was those individuals who used to present to the emergency department having a suicidal attempt. They were feeling suicidal and they came to a safe place in the emergency department to seek emergency care and crisis services that would assist them, either from admission or being able to see them on the spot, and be able to provide appropriate supports in the community to those who had actually made the attempt of suicide and were coming in for treatment and care after their attempt. It was also incumbent upon myself as a nurse, I felt, to be able to ensure that they had appropriate support, so we had a number of different solutions in the hospital.

But what I really wanted to focus on today was some of the investments that the Ontario government has made to this particular group of individuals in our society. Crisis services are a key component of the mental health system in our province. They reduce unnecessary hospitalizations, and they do improve quality of life for people experiencing mental health crises and provide access to ongoing support, especially to those who are feeling suicidal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also just want to add my support to this bill. I could go on at length as well, but I won't. My time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: There's a theme that's going on in the debate on Bill 122, and that is a lot of individuals are talking about first-hand experiences that they've had with individuals in their community, their family, their friends who have been impacted as a result of mental health issues.

It's comforting to know that we, as legislators, can actually bring that experience here. What we need is the next step, which is to actually improve the legislation based on the experiences that we have and that people can share.

I'll say it again: Bill 122 is an opportunity for us to open up the Mental Health Act to strengthen it, to actually make a difference not only in a very small population that is impacted directly as a result of the court case that caused us to get to Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, but to go beyond that and actually make improvements that will help a larger part of the Ontario population who are suffering. There's no other word to call it but "suffering" as a result of their mental health issues and, more importantly, their family and friends' challenges and frustrations in trying to get the support, the treatment, the care they need.

So, an opportunity that I would hate to see us lose by focusing on a very narrow portion of the Mental Health Act. Let's improve it. We've all told stories about how it

has impacted us, so let's actually do the next step and make the changes needed to make it better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a privilege for me to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond to the comments that were made from my colleague the member for Timmins–James Bay. I really want to congratulate the member and thank the member for his willingness to share his personal experience. I think we heard earlier today from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke as well about a family experience and how having a family member who is going through a mental health crisis impacts the rest of the family—the whole community, in fact.

1720

We know that the bill before us today, Bill 122, really is—in some ways it is groundbreaking in terms of the shift in approach that it reflects in terms of our responsibility to help people with serious mental illnesses heal. Unfortunately, the legislation, Bill 122, will only deal with 330 Ontarians. As we know from the stories that all of us have shared, that all of us are familiar with from our own personal experiences, there is a mental health crisis in this province. In my own community of London, the police said last year there was a 40% increase in calls to deal with mental illness. I talked earlier about the increasing incidents in mental health crises on Western University campuses.

We've all heard the stories; we all read the newspapers. This is a real opportunity to open up the Mental Health Act and do something meaningful for many, many thousands of Ontarians in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Timmins–James Bay. I'd like to thank him for telling his story. I think all of us have stories, maybe not the same, but all of us—every family is connected that way, and it's important that we bring it here.

I think that it's also important to remember, as a number of members said, that we're dealing with about 320 individuals. It's a very specific request by the court to address the situation. It's about access to justice and fairness. I think the bill does that in a principled way that also brings in making the Consent and Capacity Board more effective.

I don't think we need to open up the Mental Health Act to do things to address the needs in our community. I think there are other ways of doing that. I think we can open up the act, but this is not the instance or the opportunity to do it. We have an opportunity here to improve access to justice for these people and make sure they have fairness and transparency. I would urge members of the Legislature, when we get this to committee, to put forward whatever they think they would like to amend, but I think we can get this done by the time we need to get it done by.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Timmins–James Bay for final comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I want to thank members for commenting on my speech. I was trying to bring into it a bit of the reality of what families have to deal with. As the brother of Louise, who went through these experiences when living with schizophrenia for all those years, the struggle that we had as a family to be able to deal with—you know, do you keep her locked up or do you allow her to come into the community? Thank God there were some people along the way who were progressive and made us as a family understand that we had to be part of the circle of care that cared for her and helped to make decisions that would make sure that she was safe and was able to do what she had to do as a citizen and as a human being who wanted to enjoy life.

I've got to say, my sister told me before she died—and it's a very humbling thing when somebody is dying and you're in palliative services with them. I remember sitting there with Louise, crying and saying, "Louise, it's so unfair. You've had all the bad breaks," and she said, "Oh, don't you ever think that. I'm the luckiest woman in the world." She said, "I at least had my family. Yeah, I got cancer, and I'm going to die of breast cancer. There's not much I can do about that. But I've lived 61 years, and I always knew that I had my family there and that they were there to care for me and to help me through these struggles that I had to struggle at." So, Louise, I just say we miss you a lot. I miss her wise counsel. My sister gave the best political advice you could ever get. She followed politics very acutely. My dad always pretended to be the politician in the family, but Louise was far wiser when it came to politics. She had a way of just cutting through the BS and getting to what it was all about, because she'd seen it as a person on the other side, who's trying to figure out how to make ends meet and how to, basically, go through society.

So to all of those of us and all of those of you who have had to deal with this, we understand that this is a personal issue, and we need to do this because of the court decisions. I just say to Louise, miss you and love you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour for me to join with all the members in the House who have spoken today about Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act. This is an extremely important debate, not only for the issues addressed in the bill, but it's giving members in this House today an opportunity to speak about having a broader discussion on mental health. I personally believe that we don't talk enough about mental health issues, but all of us, all of the legislators, know how much it affects the lives of our constituents.

Some of us quote statistics: you know, the one in five Canadians who will personally experience a mental illness at some point in their lives. If you really sit down and analyze those numbers, it's safe to say that there isn't

one person who won't in some way be touched by mental illness, whether it's themselves or a loved one or a co-worker. We've had many stories shared today and in other debates, and I hope that debate continues so that we can have that discussion.

I think it's really essential that we, as MPPs, allow folks to get the treatment that they need. I had an opportunity recently to tour Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Addictions and Mental Health, one of the agencies on the front line in my riding. I spent some time with their CEO, Laurie Dubé. I have to tell you how pleased I was to hear Laurie talk about her team's commitment, that anyone who walks through their door with a mental health issue is seen by somebody that day. I can't overstate the importance of helping a person the moment that they show up at the door. Laurie told me that the majority of people who show up that day in crisis can be helped even with just a single meeting with a counsellor that day. They're not turned away. They're not referred to an appointment weeks down the road, because—let's face it—you risk losing them. I really wanted to thank Laurie for giving me that opportunity.

I think if anyone has the courage to come forward and ask for help, the very least our health care system can do is to provide it to them. I want to quote Laurie. She said, "If you get up the guts to walk through that door, we need to see you." I can't tell you, Speaker, how much I agree with what she said and with what her team is involved in. I know it's a challenge for her and her team, and I wanted just to make sure that—I know the minister talks about the right care at the right time in the right place. Well, that facility in Brockville which serves such a wide area really does that.

Much of our focus in mental health today is on breaking stigma. It's too long that people have been left in the shadows, so I'm glad we're having the debate. I'm encouraged by MPPs' opportunity to talk about their experiences. I know it's a challenge every day, given some limited resources. My message to this government is that I want them to show that same commitment those front-line workers show in my riding.

I want to talk a little bit about my disappointment with some of the aspects of this legislation. I'm not going to go into the mechanics of Bill 122. It has been well covered by people already. I think most speakers have talked about the Ontario Court of Appeal decision that found that the Mental Health Act was violating the Charter of Rights. I understand that the court gave the minister that one-year deadline to comply and that Bill 122 is the result of that. But I think the fact that the government has done so little to adopt the recommendations from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions over the past few years—because I was elected in 2010, and the very first meeting I had in my riding was with the representatives, Christine Elliott and the member for Dufferin–Caledon, Sylvia Jones, who were our reps on that committee, to come to my riding.

1730

We're now over five years from that report, and the government has done so little. We were hopeful that this

bill would do some more. It's disappointing that the government didn't, to use one of their words, aspire to do something better.

Worse, I find it again, with this government, rushing through legislation. The government was given until December 22, 2015, to amend the act. Our critic, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, noted the government didn't get around to even introducing Bill 122 until September 23, and they waited another month to call it for second reading. Now we've got just a little over three weeks, until the House rises, to get this bill through committee and back for third reading. It does an injustice to an issue that I think we all acknowledge we need to do a better job in dealing with.

This legislation affects the lives of our most severely ill patients in our mental health system, those who are involuntarily detained in psychiatric facilities. The legislation should have been introduced in time to have committee hearings in communities where those designated psychiatric facilities, under the act, are located: places like Chatham, Cornwall, Goderich and Lindsay; in the north, in places like Kenora and North Bay; and in my riding, the city of Brockville, where the Brockville Mental Health Centre has a history of care that dates back more than a century. I know now, as the MPP, but also as a former mayor of Brockville, that the facilities have, in every community, a very special relationship. It's a tremendously special relationship with those host communities. Again, I think the government has missed an opportunity.

In the little time I have left, I just want to put a couple of things on the record.

I'm concerned about changes made within section 39 involving the composition of the Consent and Capacity Board. The amended act allows for the substitution of a psychiatrist, at some board hearings, by a physician or a nurse practitioner. I want to stress that I don't want to get hung up on these titles. I'm focused only on the expertise of board members hearing these matters, not on their professional designation.

For me, there are two issues. Our critic noted in his leadoff how our court system defers to the Consent and Capacity Board because of its rigorous adherence to expertise. That's important, Speaker. But I believe that any move to change the composition of the board has the potential to undermine the board's well-earned status with the courts. It's something that we as legislators should not take lightly. We cannot overlook the potential impact on public safety. We're dealing with individuals at these hearings who present a risk of harm to either themselves or to society. These cases are complex. We as legislators have a responsibility to ensure that only the most highly trained and experienced individuals hear them—not the most qualified and experienced available at the time, but the most qualified and experienced, period.

I have to put my concern when I approach someone in the mental health industry who I respect, who tells me that those changes "leave me cold"—that's his quote to

me. The balance between the issues raised by the Court of Appeal and public safety is not to be trifled with, and I'm afraid that the government is doing that.

It's not enough to say we're going to do this for less complex cases that come before the board. In fact, every case is complex and requires expertise to properly assess the risk presented by someone making the application to the board. It's inevitable that, once we've opened the door to change the composition of the board at some hearings, we'll see that number increase over time. If we're doing this because we can't attract psychiatrists to the board, or to meet specific challenges in remote areas such as the north, then we need to resolve to fix those specific problems. If we need more psychiatrists, let's fix that problem. Let's not change the legislation to amend the board's composition. Let's fix the issue.

So, again, in my limited time, I want to urge the minister to consider those comments, to consider them when they go back to committee. I appreciate the opportunity to present it. I know our caucus is supporting it, but I have to make sure that the concerns that I have, given my experience and given my dealings, are on the record, and I've done so today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. I'm beginning to feel like a bit of a jack-in-the-box here today. I think this is the fourth or fifth time I've been up on this, but it's a really important issue.

I've talked a lot about proper mental health supports in the community so that we don't see people entering into a hospital setting, into long-term treatment, for mental health issues that could have been addressed out in the community. I've talked quite a bit in my time in here about the correctional services, people making it into the corrections services, people that shouldn't be in that particular system.

I think what I'm going to focus on in these two minutes is the fact that there was a court ruling, and the government waited until the last minute to bring forward these changes and didn't really give us enough time to fully discuss the bill or to give input on the changes that we think would be advantageous to the entire system when it comes to treating mental illness.

It shouldn't take this long. Yes, input and consultation are very important; we need to hear from a lot of people. But when you're looking at a court ruling and there's a deadline, it shouldn't be the 11th hour where we're rushing through this legislation. We should have had plenty of time to discuss this, to bring our concerns from our communities to the table and to have a fulsome discussion around mental health services as a whole. More and more we see this, where the government is trying to rush things through, whether that is by trying to cut off debate or bringing through items at the last minute.

Although we support the bill, it's very difficult to support a process where something is being dumped in our lap at the last minute and we're forced to try to meet a deadline.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Leeds-Grenville. I'll just restate it again: This is a specific bill that deals with a specific subset of people who don't have access to justice. The bill speaks to that; it delivers that to them.

I understand the member's concern about other practitioners. I don't share that same concern for two reasons: (1) I do believe that it's within people's scope, of those two practitioners, to be able to do that; and (2) there is a process of appointments by which people are appointed to this board, and the members of those boards can be called to that committee. I believe that's an effective way to monitor that process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, it's a pleasure to rise in questions and comments with my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, who I think spoke very eloquently about some of the challenges for mental illness and mental health across the province of Ontario. As he mentioned, the Progressive Conservative caucus will indeed be supporting this piece of legislation. We think, obviously, it is important that we are in compliance with the Ontario Court of Appeal and that there are protections in place for those with mental illness and struggling with depression across the province.

He did make a good point, however, and I do take the member opposite from Ottawa South's point that this is a very specific bill. That said, I think that there are opportunities in this assembly where we can come together, where we can all recount our personal experiences, whether that is in our own family life, with our friends or, as the member from Leeds-Grenville talked about, mental health services in the community and where the shortcomings are, perhaps, in psychiatry.

I, for one, have had the tremendous opportunity, since I became elected, to work with a number of wonderful organizations, one actually from Pembroke, in the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke's riding, the Phoenix Centre. When I was first elected, he and I had worked on children's mental health. Then, I have a very formidable relationship with the Royal in the city of Ottawa, which is our world-class mental health facility. I've been working with the youth services bureau on things like suicide prevention. All this to say that I think, from time to time in this assembly, there is an issue that captivates all of us and brings out the best in every member, regardless of where they are from in this great province, and we can actually talk about how we want to chart a course forward. That is why I think—and I agree with my colleague from Leeds-Grenville on the fact that we could be dealing with a broader-based bill at this particular time that deals with mental health right across the province.

1740

It is a shame I won't have an opportunity today, as I thought I did, to speak at greater length about this because it is a passion of mine and of so many in this assembly. But thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to offer some comments on the remarks that were shared with us by the member for Leeds-Grenville.

Certainly, like members of his caucus, members of my caucus also support Bill 122. We have an obligation to ensure that the charter rights of every citizen in this province are respected. We know that the Court of Appeal ruled that the current provisions of the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act violate the charter rights of Ontarians because the current provisions allow people who have very serious mental health illnesses to be involuntarily detained for indefinite periods of time.

This legislation is important. There's no question, Speaker: It is very important that we address this problem in the legislation and that we ensure that the rights of those people who are being involuntarily detained are fully respected. Our frustration is that we have such a short time to deal with this issue, and this legislation is so narrow in its scope when we know that there are so many other issues that have to be addressed in terms of the problems within our mental health system.

It is a huge challenge in my community of London. London police reported a 40% increase in one year in the mental health calls they are dealing with. Students on Western's campuses were seeing a rapid increase in incidents in mental health illnesses. We need to do so much more than what we're doing in Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Back to the member from Leeds-Grenville for final comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the members from Windsor West, Ottawa South, Nepean-Carleton and London West for their very thoughtful comments.

I agree with the member from London West: It is very frustrating that we have a bill with such a narrow scope when there are so many other issues that need to be dealt with.

I mentioned earlier in my 10 minutes that this report was tabled shortly after my election in 2010, and we've really not moved these recommendations forward. It just makes you a little disappointed that you can go through a non-partisan process, come up with some exceptional recommendations, recommendations that all of our citizens want us to move forward on—as my friend from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock said when we were talking during the debate that comes up during election

time, "What are you doing with this bill?"—yet it sits idle. I think it's a black mark on the government that you can't move these recommendations forward.

I respectfully disagree with my friend—through you, Speaker—the member for Ottawa South. I happen to think that with the Consent and Capacity Board, if we need more psychiatrists, then we need to deal with that issue. If we have constraints in the north, we need to deal with that. We can't just change the Consent and Capacity Board because we have a problem. We need to fix the problem. We need to have the best people available. If you're going to have the right care at the right time in the right location, you've got to have the right people doing it. I learned that when I toured my mental health facility in Brockville when I was mayor, and I learned it again as an MPP when I toured the mental health facility a few weeks ago.

We've got great people on the front line, but we need to give them the tools to do the job. When we see that there's a gap, we need to fix the gap. We need to implement this report. We can't just deal with narrow bills. We've got to fix the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane and on behalf of my caucus on this bill, Bill 122, an Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

The basics of this bill are that, due to a court ruling, the government is compelled to change the regulations for 300 people who are now being held in institutions.

In my four years here as an MPP, it's always an honour and it's always interesting to stand in this House, or sit in this House, and listen to the debate. I have to say that the debate today, this afternoon, was one of the most thought-provoking since I've been here, because many life experiences were portrayed, and all of these cases were portrayed for people who have a hard time speaking for themselves.

Any family that has been touched by mental health issues—mental health is a disease. It's a disease that you can't control. It's a disease, in many ways, like any other disease, that needs to be treated where it can be treated. But it's not a disease that's easily identified.

Today we've heard several life experiences, from my colleague from Timmins-James Bay and from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and they were both very moving. What I thought is that those were stories of people who have suffered in the past, but what we need to deal with is people who are suffering right now. There are people across this province who are suffering right now: people we could be helping in this Legislature right now; people we could have helped since that report was released that the previous member who was speaking—it was released in 2010, and few, if any, of those recommendations were really implemented.

Is this bill necessary? Yes. Is it a step in the right direction? Yes. But is this bill really addressing the

overall problem of mental health in the province of Ontario, an issue that is increasing in overall prevalence, but it's also being—we're doing a better job of identifying people, but we may not be doing a better job of helping people.

I've heard members in this House speak about personal experiences in their offices with clients they've dealt with, and we've all had them. The most frustrating—and I'm not going to name any individuals—are cases where someone has an obvious mental health issue. Maybe it's because Timiskaming—Cochrane isn't close to a major urban centre, but we cannot find help for these people. They've got obvious issues, and we know that they're going to—they're perhaps not a danger to society but certainly a danger to themselves. They need to be helped, they need to be treated, and there are no resources available in Ontario, in northern Ontario. They get shuffled around from the hospital back to the legal system back to the street back to our office back to the hospital back to the legal system.

These are people; we see them. Now that I'm here six months a year in Toronto, I see them in Toronto. I see them in my riding. We all see them.

1750

The government has been forced to implement this, to put this forward. One thing that has been universal for both the opposition and the third party is a frustration that we could be doing so much more.

Unlike many issues here, this isn't a partisan issue. No one is going to attack the other side for actually doing more on an issue as important as mental health, and you can see that, Speaker. The example is the debate today. The debate has been very respectful. We've all brought up points, we've all brought up some frustrations, but it has been very respectful because we know the issues that we're dealing with.

What I'd like to focus on here are the family histories we've heard. The two cases that I heard are about people who have passed. It's tragic. In the case of the member for Timmins—James Bay, his sister had a family who supported her. But what about the people who are here in Ontario today who don't have families to support them or who have families who are simply overwhelmed? We all know that the system isn't there in all cases to support them.

This is an issue where we can move forward without partisan wrangling, yet we're failing to do so. It's easy to

blame the government—actually, we're supposed to blame the government. This is an issue that I hope the government is listening to. We could all move forward on this issue, because this isn't about partisanship.

This bill is going to pass, as it should. It should have been part of a much larger debate. It could have moved forward much sooner, and we could have had a more encompassing debate.

The member from Ottawa South—I respect all the members in this House, but I respect his position. When the member from Ottawa South is here, he always listens, and I respect that. I respect his position, but I disagree with something he brought up—I don't remember what it was, verbatim: that we could fix the problems in other ways. Okay, let's do it. I don't care if it's a regulation. Let's do it, because right now I have people in my towns who have nowhere to go. There's no treatment available, and I know they have issues. Am I qualified to diagnose what they have? Absolutely not. But they're there. So if there are other ways to deal with this, let's do it. If we could have done it with a more wholesome bill, fine, but we don't have that in front of us. We have this, and we support it because it needs to be done. But we need to do much more.

This has been a lovely fall, but winter is coming. For people with mental health issues —they're in the winter of their life a lot, and we could do something about it. We have the knowledge, the ability. I question whether we have the collective will, because those people don't have huge political influence. They perhaps aren't big voting blocks. I would suggest that people with mental health afflictions probably aren't big voters. They have much bigger issues, believe it or not. But those are the people that we need to stand up for, because they have an affliction. They can't stand up for themselves right now, but they could. They could, and in a progressive society like ours, we need to make sure that they are able to.

So, if we don't have time to deal with this—we just need to do it. We all have the collective power to do it. Please, on behalf of all the people out there with mental health issues, we need to move forward now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since there is not enough time for questions and comments at this point in time, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lajoie, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound-Muskoka Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York-Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent-Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth-Wellington Beaches-East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland-Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daine (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton Prince Edward-Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto-Danforth Mississauga-Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron-Bruce Timiskaming-Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Elgin-Middlesex-London Willowdale Whitby-Oshawa	

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